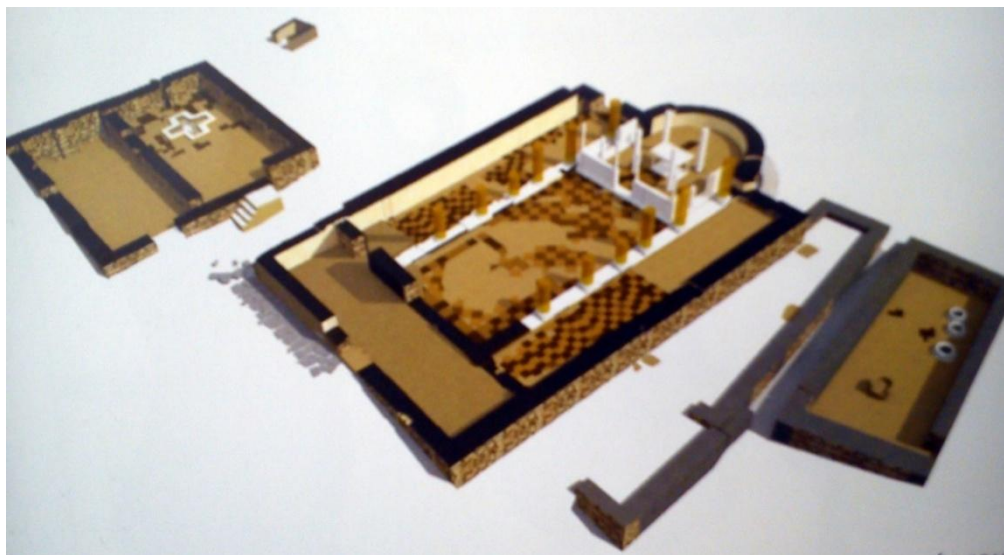




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**Early Christian Church Architecture at the Thracian Coast of
Bulgaria of the Black Sea Region**



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Abstract

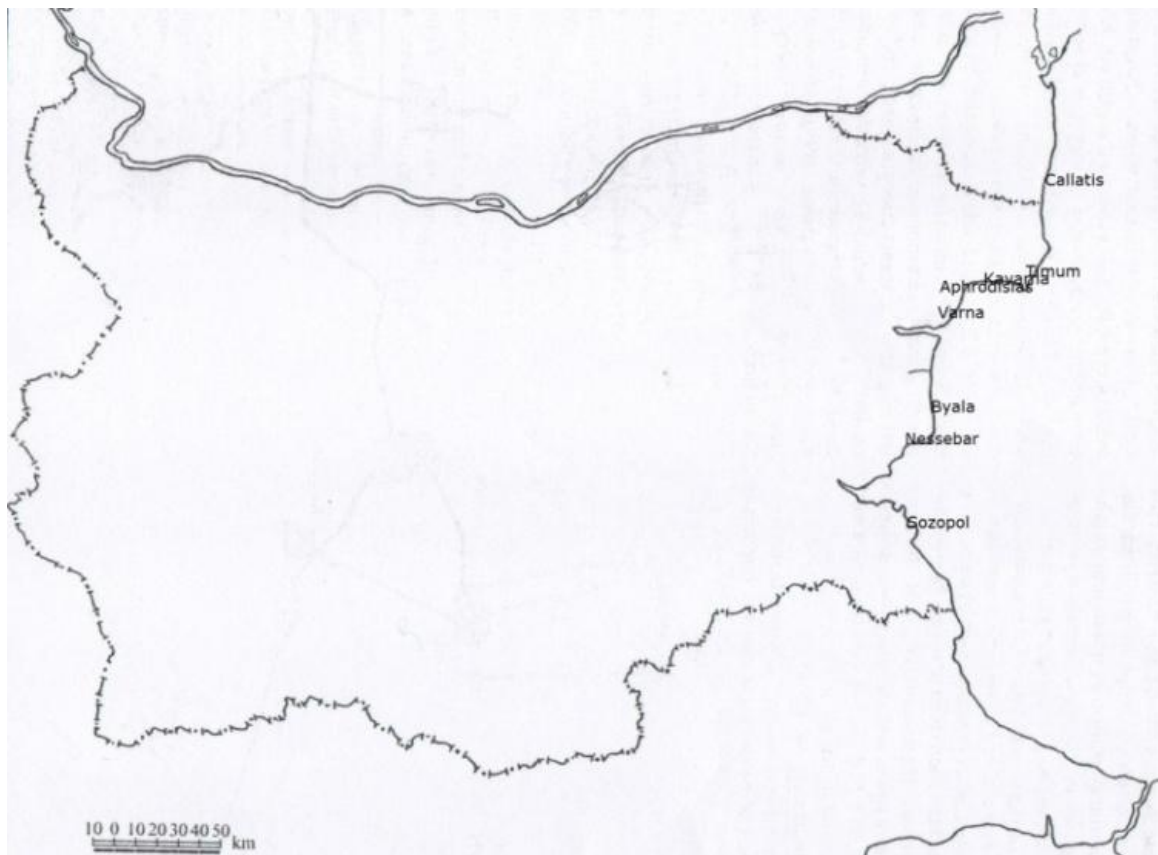
In this essay I study the Early Christian churches along the coastline of the Black Sea and, in particular, those which have come to light on the coastline of present-day Bulgaria, because they present an interesting aspect of the history and culture of the Black Sea area during Late Antiquity. In my research, I have decided to include the town of Callatis, too, which belonged to the province of Scythia during the time period under consideration but today is part of modern Romania, close to the borders with Bulgaria. Hence, I believe that this town should also be included in my research, so that the picture I form regarding the Early Christian churches of the west coasts of the Black Sea is as complete as possible.

In order to answer the question if these areas were influenced in all aspects by the capital of the empire, Constantinople, I decided to structure a detailed list of the churches which have been studied partly or in whole in the Bulgarian coastline and in the town of Callatis. To be able to answer this question, it was necessary to do a comparative study of church building on the Bulgarian coastline and that of Constantinople. In the first chapter, I study the architectural typology of the churches, I investigate the way in which churches were built and underline any exceptions or particularities in their architectural types. Furthermore, I examine the specific parts of the churches (the apse and presbytery, nave, aisles, narthex, annexes). In the second chapter, I focus on the functional constructions of the churches. Finally, in the third chapter, I investigate the role of every church in the place where it was founded.

After the architectural study of the sacred buildings and the drawing of the conclusions, following the analysis of the individual components of ecclesiastical architecture, we could quite safely claim that the churches on the west coasts of the Black Sea do not represent exact copies or replicas of the ecclesiastical prototypes that have been adopted in Constantinople. The churches examined here were deeply influenced but adopted only several of the characteristics of the churches in the capital in a selective way. The sacred buildings in the provinces of Haemimontus, Moesia Secunda and Scythia never achieved the character or the grandeur of the temples of Constantinople. What is more, it seems that in several cases the influence that was exercised on them originated from other areas, as well.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Flora Karagianni for her guidance in the choice of this extremely interesting subject, her moral support and her assistance in finding relevant and rare bibliography. I would also like to thank my professor, Dr. Ioannis D. Varalis, who has been my supporter and guide ever since the beginning of this attempt. Thanks to his advice, his knowledge and time which he offered me, I primarily managed to learn the way in which a researcher works. Additionally, his remarks and observations regarding the content of my dissertation have contributed significantly to the composition and presentation of this, hopefully successful, result.



Map of modern Bulgaria marked with coastline cities in Late Antiquity
(Source: author)

Introduction

My investigatory interest in the religious architecture of Late Antiquity, on the one hand, as well as in the history and civilization of the peoples of the Black Sea area, on the other, has been the driving force which has led me to choose the topic for this dissertation. I have decided to investigate the Early Christian churches along the coastline of the Black Sea and, in particular, those which have been completely or partly unearthed on the coastline of present-day Bulgaria, as there has yet to appear a specialized research monograph dedicated solely to them, presenting them synthetically in their totality, in correlation with other centers of the Empire in the Aegean as well as in the rest of the Mediterranean. In my research, I have decided to include the town of Callatis, too, which nowadays belongs to Romania but is geographically very close to the borders with Bulgaria and which belonged to the province of Scythia during the time period I am investigating. Hence, I believe that this town should also be included in my research, so that the picture I form regarding the late antique Christian cult places of the west coasts of the Black Sea is as complete as possible.

Research in the area I have decided to study started well in the 19th century, but intensified during the 20th century. The K. and S. Škorpil brothers were two of the most eminent field researchers in the area of the Bulgarian coastline, as they didn't limit themselves to excavating specific spots but scoured the wider area and systematically recorded the monuments of Bulgaria, which were then preserved in a far better condition than today. It is not incidental, after all, that in every publication relevant to that specific area made by modern researchers, the first cross-references involve –as a rule– the studies of the Škorpil brothers. On the other hand, I have been immensely helped by synthetic studies regarding the history of Bulgarian architecture: researchers, such as Dimitri Dimitrov, Nikolai Mavrodinov and Krăstju Mijatev, have studied in depth the history of medieval architecture not only within the borders of the country of Bulgaria of the post-war era, but also within the area which it used to occupy during the First and Second Bulgarian Empire, that is to say, within the domain of the Byzantine Empire.

Of the modern historians of medieval architecture, Stefan Boyadjiev was indubitably the major one; I have referred to many of his articles for information on the architecture and the construction phases of the temples I have studied. Two researchers that made medieval Bulgarian civilization more widely known are Ralph F.Hoddinott, who presented its ancient and medieval history in English, as well as Asen Tscilingirov, who acquainted the Western world with the ancient, Byzantine and

later art of Bulgaria in his grand opus, which was published in German. Apart from these two, there is a good number of excavators who have publicized the results of their investigations, including Iordan Ivanov and Vera Ivanova, who published their excavation findings from Sofia and its wider area; Alexander Minchev, with his excavations in Varna (*Odessos*); Konstantin Popkonstantinov, working in Sozopol; and Velizar Velkov, the most eminent excavator of Mesembria. The synthetic research of Nelly Chaneva-Dechevska on Early Christian ecclesiastical architecture in Bulgaria has been a valuable reference book for me. Finally, Ion Barnea is perchance the greatest scholar looking into the material residues of Christianity in Romania.

To make the thorough investigation of the churches of the area of my interest possible, I initially structured a detailed critical list of the churches which have been studied partly or in whole in the Bulgarian coastline and in the town of Callatis. This list is, for methodological reasons, presented as an Appendix at the end of my study. For the list to be functional, I separate the positions where the churches have been excavated in the individual provinces the Eastern Roman Empire, namely in the provinces of Haemimontus, Moesia Secunda and Scythia. The sites in each province have been ordered alphabetically. As an invaluable guide, I have used Hierokles' well-known text titled «*Synekdemos*, which dates back to the sixth century, because it includes a detailed catalogue of the towns in the various provinces of the empire.

Before I began doing any research for this specific paper, I had the idea, which was solidified by my readings of older bibliography, that the area I was going to focus on was directly influenced in all aspects by the capital of the empire, Constantinople. However, I have chosen to pose this point, which has been recorded by a wide array of scholars, from Bogdan Filov to Krăstju Mijatev and Stefan Boyadjiev, as a problem and as a view to be proven. This remark is made because, if Constantinople with its great relative influence was the model for all other towns and cities in the Black Sea, are we then to assume that that area was just the «lake» of Constantinople, without there being any other centers of influence? Did trade and the subsequent movement of people, goods and ideas, which is so well-known and widely recorded in the excavation findings from the cities and towns of the Black Sea, effectively play no part? With this dissertation on ecclesiastical architecture, my desire was to investigate whether church building along the coastline of present-day Bulgaria closely followed the standards that have been adopted in Constantinople itself from the fourth century A.D. and thereafter.

To be able to answer this question, it was necessary to do a comparative study of church building on the Bulgarian coastline and that of the capital. In the first chapter, I study the architectural typology of the churches, I investigate the way in which they were built and underline any exceptions or particularities in their architectural types. Next, I examine the specific parts of the buildings (the apse, nave and aisles, narthex, atrium and annexes) and I categorize and present each one separately, comparing them to their counterparts in the churches of Constantinople. In my study, I start from the eastern parts of the churches, which are the holiest, and end up in the western

ones, which are considered to be less holy. The uses of the different parts of the churches are sometimes obvious, yet this is not always true for all of them, as –for instance – is the case with the various annexes.

In the second chapter, I focus on the liturgical constructions of the churches. Starting again from the east and moving westwards, I investigate the interior of the apse, the *synthronon*, the altar and the ciborium, and then study the ambo in the nave and the fountain in the atrium. At the same time, I investigate whether these structures were used in Constantinople and I compare their morphology and design to those of the capital.

Finally, in the third chapter, I investigate the role of every church in the place where it was founded. I start with the cathedrals, the episcopal churches of each city; I compare them to those of other areas in Bulgaria, and –of course– to the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Subsequently, I look into the churches that were used as cemetery or martyr ones. It is very important to ascertain whether these buildings follow specific architectural prototypes or they emerge from an *ad hoc* architecture, which is defined from and adjusted to the needs and particular circumstances of each site or each city.

Having implemented the investigative approach which I detailed above, I believe I will manage to present a complete list of the churches of the western coasts of the Black Sea in the area of modern Bulgaria, from the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century, as well as the influence exerted on local architecture by Constantinople. My work concludes with a list of bibliographical abbreviations and forty-eight illustrations with plans and photographs.

Chapter 1: The Architecture of the Churches

1.1. *The architectural typology*

Single nave church: The architectural type of the aisleless church suited for the purposes of private religious foundations and served small congregations from the early Byzantine period onwards.¹ Single-nave churches are particularly associated with graves, cemeteries and/or martyr tombs, as for example the single-nave church dedicated to Saint Paul under the Octagon at Philippi, the church under Saint Sofia, Sofia and Ivanjane church. The basilica of Saint Paul at Philippi does not have any annexes, apart from the Hellenistic tomb to the north which formed part with the Christian cult.² A cist-grave was laid under the altar table of the single nave church under Saint Sofia.³ At Ivanjane the rooms on either side of the sanctuary contained big vaulted tombs; the south was accessible from the eastern part of the nave and the north from the presbytery itself.⁴ The Djanavara church (15) is not a typical single nave church since it is believed that two sacristies have been added on either side of the sanctuary in the form of two store towers and two annexes on the flanks of the small narthex. It is connected though with the above mentioned examples since a grave has been discovered under the ambo in the middle of the nave. If we are to believe the accuracy of the published plan, the walls that surround the narthex are thinner than the outer walls of the church and there is not a clear communication of the so called «sacristies» with the surrounding area. We could assume that the church has been consolidated from the outside in a later phase by enveloping the outer walls with masonry; this could have happened at a period of unsafe times in order to secure the church, probably when the three precious reliquaries were set under the altar space in the east niche of the altar crypt.⁵

The three-aisle basilica: The most common architectural type of church at the west shores of the Black Sea is the three-aisle basilica, because its plan is the most revered⁶ and rather easy to construct: an oblong hall is separated by two arcades lengthwise and an apse protrudes from the east, while a narthex is added to the west. The separating arcades are supported by columns or constructed piers.⁷ The nave is

¹ Vokotopoulos 1992, 105-106.

² Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, Bakirtzis 1997, 49-52. Pelekanidou, Mentzos 1990, 597-600.

³ Boyadjiev 2009, 17-18 figs. 1, 3-4, 16-17.

⁴ Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 300-301, fig. 97a. Hoddinott 1975, 279, 278 fig. 75.

⁵ Pace 2000, 115-116 nos. 5.1-5.3 (M. Vaklinova). Nowadays it is nearly impossible to verify the enveloping of the church because of the extensive reconstruction and rebuilding of the upper surfaces of the outer walls of the church. See below, our fig. 13c.

⁶ See Varalis 2008, 110-111, on five-aisle basilicas of the Eastern Illyricum.

⁷ Delvoye 2010, 42.

wider and higher than the aisles which rarely had galleries.⁸ Three-aisle basilicas of considerable dimensions are often cathedrals or cemetery and pilgrimage churches. The three-aisle basilicas which are registered up to date are the following: the basilica of Holy Apostles (1), the Old Metropolis (3), the basilica at the north port (4) and at the north bay (6) in Nessebăr (*Mesembria*); the basilicas at Ribarska Str. (7) and at the monastery of St. John the Baptist on the St. Ivan Island (10) in Sozopol; the basilica at Cape Sv. Atanas, Byala (12); the basilica of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Byzone (13); the basilica of Cape Charakman (14), the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16), at the Erite or Ereta stronghold (17), the Galata church (18), the Pirinć-Tepe church (19) the Škorpilovci church (20) in Varna and the basilica in Callatis (23).

Episcopal churches: The architectural type of the three-aisle basilica was extremely common for the episcopal churches all over the late Empire. In the area under consideration two three-aisle basilicas can be identified as cathedrals, the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16) and the basilica of Holy Apostles in Nessebăr (1).⁹ These two basilicas exceed much in length and width the churches of the region because they had to accommodate large congregations. Moreover, these churches are located in the very centre of the urban tissue of the late antique settlements of Odessos and Mesembria, respectively, a privileged position that has been adopted by Early Christian cathedrals in several other cities, like the five-aisle basilica under Saint Sophia in Thessalonike, the basilica Beta in Nikopolis in Epirus Vetus and the five-aisle cathedral at Gortys, Crete.¹⁰

Cemetery churches: In the area under study, although many parts of the ancient and late antique cities in the littoral of modern Bulgaria have been unearthed, strangely enough no cemetery churches have been discovered. For instance, in cities like Mesembria and Odessos several churches partly or in total have been brought to light but none of them has been identified as a cemetery one. This phenomenon seems quite strange and cannot be explained at first glance. But, if we want to mark the position of the burial grounds of these cities and search for their related cemetery churches, we should look outside the city-walls; during Late Antiquity the world of the dead lied in the exterior of the fortified settlements. Thus, the absence of cemetery churches is a problem of the research in modern times which has focused on areas within the city-walls and not on the outskirts of the cities. In Constantinople not a single cemetery church is preserved from this early period; the written sources though relate that the church of Saint Mokios had been erected outside the walls of Constantine the Great and has been used as a cemetery church.¹¹ Almost certainly further field research in the periphery of the cities under consideration will bring to light new ecclesiastical buildings and possibly one or more cemetery churches.

⁸Orlandos 1954, 60.

⁹If we accept the theory that the Old Metropolis of Mesembria has always been the episcopal church of the city, then the Holy Apostles basilica must have constituted some kind of a pilgrimage church, because of its considerable dimensions.

¹⁰Varalis 2008a, 105 fig. 2; 107-108 fig. 5; and 108-109, respectively, with previous bibliography.

¹¹Janin 1953, 367-371. Mango 1985, 35, 47. Varalis 2008a, 101.

Martyr churches: The only late antique churches that could compete in dimensions with cathedrals were the martyr or pilgrimage ones: they were dedicated to a martyr or saint buried in the underground area of the church or in its nearest vicinity, thus they were erected in the graveyards beyond the city walls. In some cases they were founded inside the fortified settlements, if the focus of the cult was a sacred place (a *hieros topos*) or a portable reliquary containing the remnants of a martyr or saint. In their feast days these churches housed solemn celebrations and accommodated huge congregations from the nearby cities or from distant places.¹² The ultimate prototype was, of course, the church of Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the other pilgrimage churches in the Holy Land.¹³ In the Balkans two of the most prominent pilgrimage centers are to be mentioned here: the church of Saint Leonidis in Corinth and the church of Saint Demetrios in Thessalonike. The church of Saint Leonidis has been erected in Lechaion, in an extramural area in the entrance of the west harbor of Corinth, on the spot where the corpses of the saint and his female followers have allegedly been washed ashore;¹⁴ Saint Demetrios has been erected above the spot where he has been secretly buried after martyrdom by his disciples, a few *insulae* to the northwest of the cathedral of the city.¹⁵

The basilica of Holy Apostles in Mesembria (1) could have been a church dedicated to a martyr, if it had not been the cathedral itself;¹⁶ thus, it may have resembled the church of Saint Demetrios in Thessalonike in some ways. The Djanavara church (15), on the other hand, built on the south side of the mouth of the lagoon of Odessos, may have been erected as a martyr church: it contained a tomb under the ambo and three precious reliquaries in the east niche of the altar crypt. It is not a church for big congregations; it would have housed small groups of people for the commemoration services of the deceased and the celebration of the memory of the saints whose relics were treasured under the altar.

In Constantinople some round churches have been erected in order to commemorate martyrs and saints: apart from the circular mausoleum of Constantine the Great in which the relics of the Apostles were to be assembled and treasured,¹⁷ circular, hexagonal and octagonal buildings dedicated to Christian cult became popular in the fifth and sixth centuries. Typical examples are Saint John Prodomos in the suburb of *Hebdomon*,¹⁸ Saint Euphemia in the old palace of Antiochos,¹⁹ the rotunda under the buildings of the Myrelaion monastery, the round *martyrion* of Saints Karpos and

¹²The bibliography on pilgrimage churches is vast; cf. Grabar 1946. Kötting 1950. Frank 2000. Elsner, Rutherford 2005.

¹³Cf. *ibid.*, as well as Maraval 1985 and Wilkinson 2002.

¹⁴Krautheimer 1986, 132, figs. 88-89.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 123-128. Bakirtzis, Sideri 1997, 45 and note 24, 354-356.

¹⁶Cf. above, note 9.

¹⁷Cf. Mango 1990.

¹⁸Mathews 1977, 55-61 figs. 27-28.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 61-67 figs. 29-30.

Papylas and, finally, the small octagon of Sançiktar Mescidi²⁰. It does not seem coincidental that the two well-known «Soros» chapels in the Chalkoprateia church and in the Blachernai shrine, which housed precious relics of the Virgin Mary, were presumably octagons.²¹ Similar round buildings do not occur in the west coasts of the Black Sea, apart from the circular (or multiconch) baptistery (?) to the northeast of the church at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16, third period). Such circular buildings are exceptional even in the whole territory of modern Bulgaria: a circular baptistery has been partly unearthed in Sandanski²² and an octagonal mausoleum has been discovered to the east of the apse of the basilica at Komatevo;²³ in addition, the well-known «Red Church» in Perouštića is a tetraconch²⁴ and a triconch baptistery has been added to the south of the narthex in the basilica at Belovo²⁵. This rarity of round or circumscribed ecclesiastical buildings in the west coasts of the Black Sea and its hinterland can be explained by the fact that such edifices needed expertise and craftsmanship that probably the architects of these regions during late antiquity did not have; the same rarity can be observed also in later times, since the only well-known circumscribed sacred building of the medieval period is the Round Church in Preslav.²⁶

Other basilicas: Seven basilicas have been located or partly unearthed along the Bulgarian shores with meager evidence concerning the division of their *naos* in nave and aisles: the church under Saint George (2) and the basilica at the south port (5) of Mesembria; the basilica of Holy Virgin (8) and Saint George (9) in Sozopol; the two Early Christian basilicas in Afrodisias (21 and 22), the basilica in Timum (25) and, finally, the unexcavated basilica (?) near the north port of Callatis (24).

The basilica and, more precisely, the three-aisle basilicas the most common and widespread type of church all over the Empire from the fourth up to the seventh century. The most influential prototype of the three-aisle basilica for the coasts of the Aegean and the Black Seas is the one that has been adopted by the basilicas of Saint John of Studios (**fig.20**)²⁷ and at the Chalkoprateia (**fig.22**) in Constantinople, both of which are dated to the middle of the fifth century.²⁸ This prototype has also been adopted in the Bulgarian inland, as for instance the first construction phase of the

²⁰Müller-Wiener 1977 (2007), 103-107, fig. 85; 186-187, fig. 198; 194-195, fig. 210, respectively.

Sançiktar Mescidi was identified with a mausoleum, a chapel or a baptistery by Pasadaios (1965, 5-55, esp. 54-55) and dated to the era before the sixth century.

²¹Cf. Mango 1998.

²²Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 314, fig. 106.

²³Ibid., 255, fig. 67. Two cist tombs have been explored in the building; the author suggests that it was a *martyrion*.

²⁴Ibid., 259, fig. 70.

²⁵Ibid., 279, fig. 85. Cf. also Varalis 2008b, 79 and note 55.

²⁶Mijatev 1974, 92-96, fig. 91-96.

²⁷Mathews 1977, 20.

²⁸Ibid., 28.

Elenska basilica, Pirdrop (**fig.26**) and the basilica at Komatevo near Plovdiv (**fig.27**) may confirm.²⁹

1.2. *The apse*

The most sacred place in every church is the apse, which is constructed in the middle of the east wall. In the Bulgarian shores two types of apse prevail: the semicircular apse and the apse which is semicircular on the interior and three-sided on the exterior.

Semicircular apse: This type of apse, which is very common in every part of the late Empire since the early fourth century, has been adopted by the basilicas of Holy Apostles (1, first phase) and near the north harbor (4) of Mesembria; the basilica at the Sv. Ivan Island to the north of Sozopol (10, phases 1 and 2); the basilica of Byala (12); Saints Cosmas and Damian in Byzone (13); the Cape Charakman basilica (14); the Galata church (18), the Pirinć-Tepe church (19, first phase) and the basilica at Škorpilovci (20). The apses of the basilicas at the north harbor of Mesembria, Byzone, Galata and Škorpilovci have the shape of a segment of a circle, which might be indicative of an early date, if compared to the apse of the basilicas of Saint Paul under the Octagon at Philippi and the first church of Saint Sophia in Sofia;³⁰ round apses in the form of a half cylinder, which can more or less be characterized as «normal» are those of the basilicas at Sv. Ivan Island (at least in the second phase) and at Byala.

Three-sided apse: This type of apse is not uncommon, but it occurs in examples that are dated later than the mid-fifth century: the basilica of Holy Apostles (1, second phase), the Old Metropolis (3) and the church at the north bay (6) of Mesembria; the Erite or Ereta basilica (17), and the Pirinć-Tepe church (19, second phase) in Varna. The apse of the basilica of Holy Apostles (1, second phase) in Mesembria is in fact semicircular on the interior and faceted on the outside by three sides of an octagon. The apse of the Old Metropolis of Mesembria is faceted on the outside by three sides of a hexagon, like the basilica at the north bay of the city, the Erite and the Pirinć-Tepe basilicas. The three-sided apse in the form of a semi-hexagon can be found in other examples, as well; for instance, they are adopted in basilica no.1 in Abrit, Dobrich district³¹ (**fig. 28**) and the basilicas no. 1 and no. 3 in Hissar (**figs. 29 and 30**).³²

The apse of the Djanavara basilica (15) does not protrude from the east wall, much alike the basilica at Callatis (23, second phase). This particular form of the apse is not infrequent in north Syria³³ but in my opinion there is not any need to search for such

²⁹ Hoddinott 1975, 282, 292-293.

³⁰ For Philippi, see above note 2. For Sofia, cf. Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 295-296, fig. 93.

³¹ Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 169.

³² Ibid., 263, 266.

³³ Orlandos 1954, 45, 46, 211.

distant prototypes; the *martyrion* of Saints Karpos and Papyllas in Constantinople ends to the east in a straight wall, which contains an apse formed like a niche.³⁴

The apse of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16) is faceted on the outside by five sides of a polygon and it overcomes the hemicycle on the interior. This specific type of apse is quite uncommon: it is adopted in the last construction phase of the basilica «Γ» at the castle of Šumen, in the basilica no. 2 at Krumovo Kale (**fig. 32**), and in the single-nave church of Veliko Tărnovo,³⁵ as well as in the Topkapi Sarayi basilica in Constantinople (**fig. 23**).³⁶

The mid-fifth century Studios basilica (**fig. 20**) and the Chalkoprateia basilica³⁷ (**fig. 22**) set out the rule for the churches' apses in the capital: semicircular on the interior and three-sided on the exterior (faceted by three sides of a hexagon or an octagon on the outside). These apses are adopted in fifth and sixth-century churches like the Beyazit B and C basilicas, if we believe that they could be dated to the Early Byzantine period and not later,³⁸ as well as in the Hagia Sophia (**fig. 21**), the Hagia Eirene (**fig. 25**) and the church of Saints Sergios and Bacchos.³⁹

Thus, the semicircular apses, for the most part those that take the form of a segment of a circle in plan, can be dated earlier than the three-sided ones. This is more obvious in the example of the basilica at Pirinč-Tepe (19), which was semicircular in the first period of the church, and later, possibly during the period of Justinian, it was reconstructed as three-sided taking the form of a half-hexagonal prism. In conclusion, it becomes obvious that three-sided apses on the exterior were quite popular during the Early Christian period⁴⁰ and in the west littoral of the Black Sea are frequent after the middle of the fifth century.

Side Apses: Small apses at the east ends of the aisles are attested in the three-aisle basilica near the Aladja monastery,⁴¹ and in the old church at the monastery of Saint John on Sv. Ivan Island to the north of Sozopol (10). The side apses of the former belonged probably to the initial phase; the side apses of the later belong to later construction phases. The existence of such apses does not predetermine the nature or the uses of the rooms to which the apses belong.⁴² The earliest known church with side apses is the episcopal basilica at Caričin Grad, dated to the period of Justinian: the apses belonged to separate chapels or funerary rooms that did not communicate with the sanctuary, thus they had no liturgical use.⁴³ Side apses are also known from examples in Greece, like the church on the Acropolis of Sparta, dated to the end of the

³⁴Cf. Müller-Wiener 1977 (2007), 186-187, fig. 198.

³⁵Cf. Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 185-186 fig. 11, 193-194 fig. 20, and 201 fig. 28, respectively.

³⁶Mathews 1977, 35-37, fig. 17.

³⁷Mathews 1977, 30.

³⁸Ibid., 69 and figs. 34-35.

³⁹Ibid., 92 fig. 49, 81 fig. 41 and 44 fig. 19, respectively.

⁴⁰Krautheimer 1986, 105.

⁴¹Minchev 1986, 40. Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 179.

⁴²See Varalis 2004, 824, who comments on churches in Crete.

⁴³Duval 1984, 407-409, figs. 3-4.

sixth or the seventh century,⁴⁴ the Tigani basilica, Mani, dated to the end of the seventh century,⁴⁵ and Saint Titus in Gortys, Crete, recently dated before 827-828.⁴⁶ Side apses can also be enrolled in basilicas like those at Devnja, in the forum of *Novae*, at Karanovo (in the third construction phase), at Branipole, at Hissar (basilica no. 9) (**fig. 40**), in Golyamo Belovo (**fig. 39**) and at the Elenska basilica, Pirdrop (**fig. 26**).⁴⁷

The east end of the aisles of the basilica at the north bay of Mesembria (4) is occupied by trefoils which were probably used as separate chapels and they could have been erected at a later date; trefoils and quatrefoils flanking the area of the sanctuary are only known at the domed basilica at Dere Ağzı in Asia Minor, dated *ca.* 900, and in Constantinople at the Lips monastery and the Myrelaion church.⁴⁸ In these three churches the trefoils and quatrefoils are essential elements of the original plan of the church for the prothesis and diakonikon.⁴⁹

1.3. *The nave*

It is easy to notice from the start that the width of the nave is almost always twice as wide as that of the aisles.⁵⁰ The basilica of Holy Apostles (1), the Old Metropolis (3), the basilica near the north harbor (4), and the one at the north bay (6) of Mesembria are indicative examples. In many cases the nave is wider than the two aisles together; the nave of the basilica at Byala (12) is almost twice wider than both the aisles together. The same can be observed at the basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Byzance (13), at the basilicas at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16), the Erite or Ereta (17), Galata (18), Pirinč-Tepe (19), Škorpilovci (20) and Callatis (23). The naves in the Studios⁵¹ (**fig. 20**) and the Chalkoprateia⁵² (**fig. 22**) basilicas in Constantinople are certainly twice as wide as the aisles. Many churches in modern Bulgarian territories follow the same plan, like the basilica at Branipole, Plovdiv⁵³ (**fig. 31**), the basilica no. 3 in Hissar⁵⁴ (**fig. 30**), and the basilica no. 1 in Abrit⁵⁵ (**fig. 28**).

Arcades: The *naos* is normally divided by colonnades or arcades resting upon constructed pillars that started from the east and ended on the west wall of the

⁴⁴Cf. Sweetman, Katsara 2002 with older bibliography.

⁴⁵Gkioles 1987, 19, fig. 2.

⁴⁶Mamaloukos 2013.

⁴⁷Mijatev 1974, 16-17, figs. 7-8 and 17-18, figs. 9-10 (Golyamo Belovo and Pirdrop basilica, respectively). Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 184 fig. 10, 205 fig. 31, 245-247 fig. 60, 255-257 fig. 68, 274-275 fig. 81, 277-281 fig. 85, 303-309 fig. 100, respectively.

⁴⁸Krautheimer 1986, 285-287, fig. 245; 358-360, fig. 312; 356-358, fig. 309, respectively.

⁴⁹Cf. Varalis 2006a.

⁵⁰Orlandos 1954, 159.

⁵¹Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 230.

⁵²Mathews 1977, 28.

⁵³Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 256.

⁵⁴Ibid., 266.

⁵⁵Ibid., 169.

quadratum populi into nave and aisles. Columns are confirmed in the basilicas of Holy Apostles (1, first phase), the Old Metropolis (3), the basilica near the north harbor (4), and at the north bay (6, first phase) of Mesembria; in the basilica of Byala (12); in the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16, second phase), and in the Erite or Ereta (17), the Galata (18) and the Pirinč-Tepe (19) basilicas. The Corinthian capital that belongs to the church under Saint George (2) in Mesembria is an indication that colonnades existed in this church, as well. In Constantinople colonnades run between the nave and the aisles as a rule; churches like the Studios basilica (**fig. 20**) and Hagia Sophia (**fig. 21**) are unnecessary to mention.⁵⁶ Colonnades are also used in other regions, like the basilica no. 2 at Tărgoviște⁵⁷ (**fig. 32**), the one at the «Patriarchal complex» in Veliko Tărnovo⁵⁸ (**fig. 33**), the basilica no. 2 in Pleven⁵⁹ (**fig. 34**), and that in Yourta, near Hissar⁶⁰ (**fig. 35**). Constructed pillars were used only at periods of time when it was either expensive or impossible to find marble monolithic columns; thus, pillars are attested in the ninth-century reconstruction of the Old Metropolis, Mesembria (3) and in the third phase of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16). Arcades resting upon constructed pillars are documented in the basilicas no. 6 and no. 8 in Hissar⁶¹ (**figs. 36-37**), the basilica at Deli-Douška⁶² in Preslav (**fig. 38**) and the basilica in Golyamo Belovo⁶³ (**fig. 39**). We may assume that columns, bases and column capitals that were cut and hewn in the marble quarries of Proconnesos, the famous quarries of Constantinople, were transported by sea to the port-cities of the west shore of the Black Sea.⁶⁴

In the second period of the basilica of Holy Apostles (1) in Mesembria both arcades were reconstructed and pillars were inserted into the colonnades. This alternation of columns and pillars, the precise aspect of which is still to be revised, may originate from Thessalonike or Constantinople and seem to date from the period after the third or fourth decade of the sixth century: the basilica of Saint Demetrios is dated to the third or fourth decade of the sixth century,⁶⁵ the church of Saint Polyeuktos is dated before 527-528, and Hagia Sofia between 532 and 537.⁶⁶

In the case of the basilica of the north bay (6) in Mesembria it is obvious that the nave and the south aisle were separated by four piers, while the north aisle is separated by a wall. The same occurs in Beyazit basilica C, if the walls drawn on the published plan

⁵⁶Delvoye 2010, 76, 285.

⁵⁷Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 194.

⁵⁸Ibid., 204.

⁵⁹Ibid., 215.

⁶⁰Ibid., 275.

⁶¹Ibid., 271, 273.

⁶²Hoddinott 1975, 262.

⁶³Ibid., 298.

⁶⁴For the Roman period, cf. recently Minchev 2012, who relates that the importations from Proconnesos are «unofficially» estimated to be up to 90% of the marble material preserved (ibid., 50). For the late antique period, cf. Vanderheyde, Prochaska 2011, 354, 372-375 and Vanderheyde 2012, 6, where the author mentions that other sources of marble are to be identified in the future.

⁶⁵Spieser 1984, 211-214.

⁶⁶Mathews 1977, 52 and 88, respectively

separating nave and aisles are not simple foundations as has already been assumed.⁶⁷ This is also the case in the second period of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16) in Odessos, where walls separate the nave from the aisles. This peculiar characteristic, if it does not indicate some kind of special use of these basilicas both in the Black Sea cities and in Constantinople, it surely shows that the nave and the aisles needed to be isolated for some special function, the nature of which is difficult to assess with the limited published data that we are aware of.

Floors: Marble plaques were used in floor pavements only in cases of rich donations; pavements made of clay tiles were used in smaller foundations.⁶⁸ The floors of the churches across the Bulgarian shores seem not follow any specific rule; there are only a few examples preserved which provide us with evidence on the materials and the techniques used in floor pavements. The church of Holy Apostles (1, second phase), the basilica near the north harbor (4) in Mesembria, the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16, third phase) and the nave of the Djanavara church (15) had floors paved with marble slabs. The basilica at Byala (12) had its floor covered with clay tiles. The basilica in Callatis (23) had the sanctuary area covered with brick tiles and the nave paved with large marble slabs. Mosaics are attested only in the annex of the Old Metropolis (3) in Mesembria, in the nave and aisles of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16, second period) and in the four annexes of the Djanavara church (15). We ignore the materials of the original pavements in the Studios and the Chalkopateia basilicas in Constantinople, thus any comparison seem hazardous.

Brick tiles is the common material for pavements in other churches that have been unearthed in modern Bulgarian lands, like the basilica I in Iatrus,⁶⁹ the Komatevo basilica,⁷⁰ and the second, of the three in total, church found in Tsar Krum ;⁷¹ the latter had been paved with broken clay tiles, which were laid directly upon a layer of earth. The first church under Saint Sofia in Sofia had floors paved with mosaics made of multicolored tesserae.⁷² Thus, marble slabs were used only in exceptional cases, because marble was an expensive material and its treatment required much labor and a considerable amount of funds.

1.4. *The narthex and exonarthex*

The narthex is a separate hall to the west of the nave and aisles⁷³ and it was used both as vestibule and as a room for people who were not allowed to attend the mass. It is well-known that the narthex was the place where the catechumens went after their

⁶⁷Mathews 1977, 69 and fig. 35.

⁶⁸Krautheimer 1986, 257.

⁶⁹Hoddinott 1975, 245.

⁷⁰Ibid., 292- 293 fig. 82.

⁷¹Ibid., 265 fig. 66.

⁷²Ibid., 273 fig. 70.

⁷³Orlandos 1954, 131.

dismissal at the end of the first part of the Liturgy⁷⁴ and where those who had been punished with some penance, the second grade of the perpetrators and the *prosklaiontes*, stayed and prayed.⁷⁵

The narthex in the area under consideration is attested in almost all cases: in the basilica of Holy Apostles (1), the Old Metropolis (3, second period), the basilica at the north harbor (4), the basilica at the north bay (6) in Mesembria; in the basilica of Sozopol (7); in the basilica at Byala (12); in the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Byzone (13); in the Djanavara church (15), in the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16), in the basilica at Erite or Ereta (17), in the Galata church (18), in the Pirinć-Tepe church (19) and in the basilica of Škorpilovci (20) in Odessos.

In many cases the narthex is divided in three bays, following the separation of the *quadratum populi*. This is achieved with two constructed pairs of pilasters that protrude from the east and west walls of the narthex in alignment with the colonnades of the *naos*. As a result, the central area of the narthex is in most cases twice as big as the side bays; thus, this central area has the width of the nave. This can be observed in the basilica of Holy Apostles (1), the Old Metropolis (3), the basilica at the north harbor (4) and the church at the north bay (6) in Mesembria, in the basilica of Sozopol (7), in the basilica of Byala (12) and in the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16) in Odessos.

The narthexes of churches like Saints Cosmas and Damian in Byzone (13) and the basilicas of Erite or Ereta (17), Galata (18), Pirinć-Tepe (19) and Škorpilovci (20) in Varna did not dispose of any constructed pilasters and the plans of these churches show the narthex as a single hall without interior divisions. Even if we do not have any evidence on the division of these narthexes in bays, such divisions could have existed in the upper parts of the walls which have not been preserved: the narthex of the Acheiropoietos basilica in Thessalonike, for example, is divided in three bays by means of two arches resting upon marble corbels set in alignment with the interior colonnades.⁷⁶ Such corbels are inexistent, to my knowledge, or simply unknown or unpublished from the area under study.

On the other hand, the narthex is absent from the basilica in Callatis (23).

The Studios basilica (**fig. 20**) has a three-bay narthex⁷⁷ and it is probable that also the Chalkoprateia basilica (**fig. 22**), the plan of which presents close similarities with that of the Studios basilica, had also a three-bay narthex.⁷⁸ It is likely that the ground floor bays of the narthex of the Studios basilica were not covered with constructed vaults and the narthex gallery had a wooden floor.⁷⁹ It seems that as early as the middle of

⁷⁴Mathews 1977, 152.

⁷⁵Orlandos 1954, 136.

⁷⁶Krautheimer 1986, 99-103, fig. 50.

⁷⁷Mathews 1977, 20.

⁷⁸Ibid., 29.

⁷⁹Ibid., pls. 11-12.

the fifth century the Studios basilica sets out the rule for the interior division of the narthex which seems to be rather formal than functional. The narthexes of the great foundations of Justinian, Hagia Eirene (**fig. 25**) and Hagia Sophia (**fig. 21**), are compartmentalized by means of arches resting upon pilasters: the narthex of Hagia Eirene, divided in five bays that are covered with groin-vaults, is wider than the *naos* itself, since two rectangular rooms at either end jut out from the long walls of the church;⁸⁰ the narthex of Hagia Sophia is divided into nine bays that are also covered with groin-vaults by means of buttressing arches, which rest upon pilasters projecting only from the west wall.⁸¹

Three-bay narthexes can be found in the basilica no. 1 at Abrit,⁸² the basilica no. 1 in Kabile,⁸³ the so-called «Red Church» in Peruštica (**fig. 41**),⁸⁴ the basilica at Golyamo Belovo near Pazardjik⁸⁵ (**fig. 39**) and the basilicas nos. 4b, 6, 7 and 9 in Hissar⁸⁶ (**fig. 40**), as well as in Saint Sofia, Sofia.⁸⁷ Narthexes that appear to be single halls without interior divisions are numerous; the most significant examples are the basilicas no. 2 and 5 in Hissar and the basilica no. 8 in Momina Banya.⁸⁸

The narthex took some of the functions of the atrium and the annexes at periods of time when construction activity has been restricted by economical or other reasons; that's why in some later cases parts of the narthex were closed with masonry and functioned as baptisteries or sacristies. The most telling example is the basilica of antique Byala at Cape Sv. Atanas (12): the excavator includes the baptismal font with the two facing stairs that he found in the north part of the narthex in the initial construction phase of the church and dates a small apse that blocked the entrance to the north aisle to a later period with no conclusive arguments.⁸⁹ If we are to believe the published reconstructions of the basilica's building history, this font has been constructed in alignment with the door to the north aisle and this alignment does not make any sense if we do not associate the font with the construction of the «later» apse that probably functioned as the apse of the baptistery (**figs. 6-7**). Constructed basins or stone vases of considerable dimensions, which probably took the functions of the fountain of the atrium, have been found inside the narthex in several churches of the Balkans⁹⁰ and in some other cases baptismal fonts have been installed in the

⁸⁰ Peschlow 1977, 126-128, plans 2, 10, 11 and pls. 8-11, who thinks that the rectangular rooms are in fact vestibules of the aisles.

⁸¹ Mathews 1977, 91, fig. 49.

⁸² Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 169, fig. 1.

⁸³ Ibid., 235-237, fig. 55a.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 258-259, fig. 70.

⁸⁵ Hodinott 1975, 298.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 310-311. Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 268-269 fig. 76, 271 fig. 78, 272 fig. 79, 274 fig. 81, respectively.

⁸⁷ Boyadjiev 2009, fig. 21.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 306.

⁸⁹ Minchev 2013, 20-24

⁹⁰ Cf. Pallas 1980, 516 and notes 113-113a, with many examples.

eastern parts of the aisles;⁹¹ both phenomena are dated to later periods, at least during the second half of the sixth century. Moreover, a baptistery was installed in the north part of the narthex at the Galata church (18), Varna at a later period, as well.

As far as the exonarthexis concerned, only the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str., Odessos (16) had one: this exonarthex was added in a second building phase. The exonarthex does not appear frequently in the provinces under study; Draganoveć, Branipole, Buhovo, Kosteneć, Sandanski no. 2, and the «Red Church» in Perouštica⁹² (**fig. 41**) have a second narthex added to the west. Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is the only church with an exonarthex⁹³ (**fig.21**) in the capital: we may assume that this was needed to accommodate the numerous faithful during the early part of liturgy and the various afternoon and night offices that were sung in the narthex. If this is true, then we may imagine that an exonarthex was needed to the west of the church at Perouštica, rather because the tetraconch did not have adequate dimensions for the congregation it served and that the Odessos church either did not disposed of an atrium or its congregation was equally large.

1.5. *The atrium*

The atrium is a courtyard surrounded by porticos on the four or three sides that is placed between the church and the street or streets that encompass the ecclesiastical complex.⁹⁴ It separated the church from both the noise of the street and the trouble of the city; it also functioned as an antechamber for the concentration, the internal preparation and the ritual ablutions of the faithful. According to Dimitrios Pallas, the first part of the Christian liturgy took place in the atrium in the early period of Christian worship.⁹⁵

Only rarely the atrium is adopted in the churches of the west shores of the Black Sea: the Old Metropolis or Saint Sophia in Mesembria (3) and the basilica in Callatis (23) are the sole examples that I have enrolled. In both cases, the atrium was added at a later period: the walls of the atrium in the Old Metropolis of Mesembria do not bond with the walls of the narthex; the church of Callatis in its first period had an open courtyard to the south, which was later transformed into an atrium with three porticos.

As early as the middle of the fifth century the existence and the function of an atrium can be considered as normal for the ecclesiastical architecture in Constantinople: the

⁹¹ For instance, in the east end of the south aisle of the basilica of Byzari, Crete (Varalis 2004, 823-824) and in the east part of the north aisle of the south basilica of Alyki, Thasos, in front of the door that led to the north basilica (Sodini, Kolokotsas 1984, 129-131, pl. 42,c-e).

⁹² Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 197 fig. 22, 255-256 fig. 68, 299 fig. 96, 309-310 fig. 102, 310-311 fig. 103, 258-259 fig. 70, respectively.

⁹³ Mathews 1977, 91.

⁹⁴ Orlandos 1954, 94-110.

⁹⁵ Pallas 1950, 279-289 and 1980, 499-508.

Studios⁹⁶ (**fig. 20**) and the Chalkoprateia basilicas⁹⁷ (**fig. 22**) had atriums surrounded by three porticos. In Constantinople doorways were opened in the center of the west wall of the church that gave access from the yard of the atrium to the narthex: the quinque partite entrance at the Studios basilica, which was formed by four columns aligned as if they formed a portico on the east side of the atrium, is valid proof.⁹⁸ Hagia Eirene and Hagia Sophia (**fig. 21**), the foundations of Justinian, follow the same tradition: three entrances in the middle part of the west wall of the church are opened in both of them.⁹⁹ This tradition is also kept in the churches under study: at least in Mesembria, a door in the middle of the west wall of the church gave access from the yard of the atrium or the west courtyard of the church to the narthex as the Old Metropolis (3) and the basilica at the north bay of the city (6) prove.

In the rest of the provinces in the present-day Bulgarian lands, the atrium is often attested: Škorpilovci, Pleven no. 2 (**fig. 34**), Kabile no. 1 (**fig. 43**), and Sandanski no. 1 are some revealing examples.¹⁰⁰

1.6. *The annexes*

Early Christian churches often had a number of annexes attached to them: these annexes were mostly rectangular rooms added to the flanks of the atrium or the narthex or the *naos* itself. In some cases they had an apse, usually on the east side, and took the form of a chapel. Only in rare cases these annexes were built at some distance from the church. The function of such subsidiary rooms is often blurred by the lack of archaeological finds; many researchers and excavators have proposed ungrounded arguments on their supposedly liturgical role or connection with the sanctuary.¹⁰¹ I think that one should be very cautious in granting functions and uses to such annexes, unless a valid ground for the liturgical role of these annexes is established, beyond any reasonable doubt.

A rectangular annex has been unearthed at the south side of the narthex of the basilica of Holy Apostles in Mesembria (1), the east and north walls of which seem to bond with the walls of the narthex. An almost square annex has been added to the north side of the atrium of the Old Metropolis in the same city (3); this room did not have a south wall of its own, since it used the north wall of the atrium. Parts of the mosaic pavement of the room have been discovered. A symmetrical room is thought to have existed on the south side of the atrium, and it often appears in published plans of the church, but its existence is conjectural. The church at the north bay (6) of the city had

⁹⁶Mathews 1977, 20.

⁹⁷Ibid., 28-29.

⁹⁸Ibid., pl. 3.

⁹⁹Ibid., figs. 40 and 48.

¹⁰⁰Chaneva-Dechevska, 181, fig. 8, 215, fig. 40, 236, fig. 55, 312, fig. 104, respectively.

¹⁰¹Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 70-75. Cf. Varalis 2008b.

two annexes of unknown destination to the west of the narthex and on either side of the central corridor that led to the entrance of the church.

Two buildings to the west and south of the basilica in the late antique settlement of Byala, at Cape Sv. Atanas (12), have been explored and dated to the third period of the basilica: a small room in front of the main entrance is thought to have been used as a sacristy; a two story building to the south is identified as the house of the priest.

A circular annex to the north side of the apse of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16), presumably added during the third period, has been identified with a baptistery. A baptistery was added to the Pirinć-Tepe basilica (19) during the second phase of the church; another room at the north side of the basilica had an unknown use. The Djanavara church (15) is a unique case: four rooms-annexes in the form of two story towers, one at each corner of the church, were found. More precisely, two rooms were attached to the north and south side of the apse and other two at the flanks of the narthex. The use of three of the annexes is not certain, yet the baptismal font has been found in the northwest annex. The basilica in Callatis had some rooms on the east side of the atrium, which probably were used as dwellings.

Baptisteries in Constantinople are not fully explored. A fragment of a baptismal font is said to have been found at the area to the north of the Topkapi Sarayı basilica (**fig. 23**), where a distinct annex probably stood; the octagonal structure unearthed to the north of the atrium of the Chalkoprateia basilica belongs to the baptistery of the church.¹⁰² The baptisteries in the churches of Constantinople do not lie all to the north of the *naos*: the baptistery of Hagia Sophia (**fig. 21**), an octaconch within a square, stands to the south of the church.¹⁰³ Another annex identified with the *skeuophylakion* (sacristy) can be found to the northeast corner of Hagia Sophia: it is the only building of the original church, the only construction that can be dated to the period of Constantine the Great.¹⁰⁴ The location of the baptistery to the south of the church can be found in sixth-century basilicas in Bulgarian lands; the Elenska basilica at Pirdrop (**fig. 26**) had two annexes on either side of the narthex, the north of which was rectangular and contained a spiral staircase, and the south is composed of a small vestibule with a staircase and of an apsidal chamber which might have been used as baptistery, although there are no indications of a baptismal font.¹⁰⁵ The south west annex of the basilica in Komatevo (**fig. 27**) is surmised to function as baptistery, yet no signs of a font have been unearthed. The so-called «Red Church» in Perouštica (**fig. 41**) was provided with a square baptistery at the northwest corner of the church; the rectangular apsidal annex at the other side of the exonarthex is of unknown use.¹⁰⁶

Baptisteries, as distinct annexes, are added to the flanks of the narthex or the *naos* at later periods: for instance, a triconch baptistery is added to the south of the narthex in

¹⁰² Mathews 1977, 35 and 30, fig 12, respectively.

¹⁰³ Delvoye 2010, 67. Cf. Dark, Kostenec 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Mathews 1977, 89. Cf. also Varalis 2006b, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Hoddinott 1975, 282, fig. 78.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 295, fig. 83.

the basilica of Golyamo Belovo (**fig. 39**), while a single-nave chapel was added to the north of the basilica no. 8 in Hissar (**fig. 37**), in the east apse of which a baptismal font has been inserted.¹⁰⁷

Apart from baptisteries, some of the annexes built in connection or at some distance of the *naos* could have functioned as *mausolea* or funerary halls for commemorative services. For instance, to the east of the apse of the Komatevo basilica, an octagonal building contained two cist graves under the pavement.¹⁰⁸ Any association with the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem might be conjectural, but the pattern of a basilica and an octagonal mausoleum to the east of the apse resembles the Palikura complex, near Stobi.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Hoddinott 1975, 298, 307.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 292-293, fig. 82.

¹⁰⁹ Hoddinott 1963, 185-186, fig. 95, pl. 52.

Chapter 2: The Liturgical Constructions

2.1. *The sanctuary*

The apse and the area in front of it are considered to be the most sacred in a Christian church. The bloodless mystery of the Holy Eucharist, which evokes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, takes place in the sanctuary.¹¹⁰ The clergy performed the celebration of the Eucharist in the most appropriate and solemn way on the altar; the sanctuary area over the time was isolated from the other space of the naos with the chancel barrier and equipped with constructions like the synthronon and the canopy above the altar.

Only in three instances the remains of an altar are attested in the Bulgarian littoral which is under consideration here. The poros blocs coming from an older building were reused to form the altar in the basilica of Holy Apostles (1) in Mesembria; the altar was also made of stone masonry at the center of the apse of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16), Odessos; lastly, all we know about the altar of the basilica of the antique Byala at Cape Sv. Atanas (12), its special stone base.

The canopy over the altar consists of four columns which hold a domed or pyramidal roof.¹¹¹ Only three churches preserved fragments of a marble canopy in the area under study: marble ancient members have been reused for the canopy over the altar of the basilica of Holy Apostles (1) in Mesembria; two small column shafts might belong to the canopy of the altar at the church under Saint George (2) in the same city; lastly, the basilica of antique Byala (12) probably preserves some of the canopy members, if we are to believe the published reconstitution plans of the church.

The *synthronon* contained a throne for the bishop in the middle of the apse curve and simple or stepped banquettes for the presbyters' seats.¹¹² In very few cases there is evidence of a synthronon: the Old Metropolis of Mesembria (3) has a three-stepped synthronon set amphitheatrically along the curve of the apse; the basilica of Byala (12) acquired a synthronon only in the second construction phase; the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos (16, second period) had a narrow synthronon along the hemicycle of the new apse in the form of a low banquette.

The sanctuary area was separated from the rest of the nave by a chancel screen which usually was Pi-shaped (Π) and had the main entrance in the middle of the west side and two small ones on the flanks.¹¹³ The west entrance was emphasized in some cases

¹¹⁰Orlandos 1954, 438.

¹¹¹Ibid., 472.

¹¹²Ibid., 489.

¹¹³Ibid., 509.

with a *prostoon* formed by four colonnettes holding an epistyle. The basilica of the antique Byala (12) had a marble chancel screen of this type in both the first and second periods. Parts of a chancel screen have been reported in the basilica at Škorpilovci (20) near Varna. The basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16) in Odessos acquired a new (?) marble chancel screen during its second phase. Two small marble piers have been found in the basilica of the south port basilica (5) in Mesembria; it is not certain whether they belonged to the chancel screen of the basilica or if they have been transferred on the spot at a later date. The basilica of Callatis (23) is one of the rare cases that had a wooden chancel screen even in its first period.

The existence of underground crypts in the areas of the sanctuary or nave is not uncommon.¹¹⁴ A cross-shaped crypt has been explored in the middle of the north side of the sanctuary at the basilica near the port (4) in Mesembria. A reliquary crypt has been surmised under the main altar of the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos, while another crypt, constructed with bricks and mortar, has been explored in the south part of the sanctuary; it contained two receptacles or cases: the east case was found empty, while the west case, which was covered by a reused column base, contained a marble reliquary with a small stone vase and a small piece of wood (16, second period). The church underwent a total renovation at the beginning of the sixth century: in the center of the new sanctuary the drum of a double-column was placed in a cavity under the altar; its upper surface has been cut out inside for the deposition of a new bone relic (16, third period). A vaulted crypt was built 3m under the altar of the Djanavara church in Varna (15), in the east niche of which a reliquary containing two smaller relic cases, one inside the other, was found; the crypt communicated through a constructed tunnel with a vaulted tomb under the ambo in the center of the nave. A rectangular crypt under the floor of the nave has been also explored in the basilica of Škorpilovci (20) near Varna.

Thin evidence for the existence of the sanctuary is preserved in the Studios basilica in Constantinople. The altar is totally missing, because of the installation of a mihrab in the area of the apse, when the church was transformed into a mosque; earlier plans show traces of two and a half steps of the semicircular amphitheatrical synthronon. A cross-shaped reliquary crypt was found under the altar, which stood amidst the sanctuary area; the chancel screen was Pi-shaped and comprised a marble stylobate, green marble small piers and probably white marble slabs.¹¹⁵ Only two little piers belonging to the original, probably Pi-shaped, chancel screen have been found in the Chalkoprateia basilica;¹¹⁶ the altar site was marked by a cross-shaped underground reliquary crypt, similar to the one at Studios basilica.¹¹⁷ Hagia Eirene preserves the greater part of the late antique synthronon, which now consists of six steps.¹¹⁸ It is obvious that the basilicas in Constantinople contained reliquary crypts under the altar,

¹¹⁴Orlandos, 1954, 455-456.

¹¹⁵Mathews, 1977, 26 fig. 10; 27 and 24 fig. 8.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 33, fig. 15.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 33.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 85, fig.45.

although it is not known whose saints' relics were kept there. The existence of a synthronon in all these above-mentioned churches shows the importance that they had for the celebration of the liturgy by the bishop and his numerous clerics in the capital.

At the rest of the Bulgarian region, only few churches have been discovered with preserved fragments of their altar, synthronon and chancel screens. Scarce remains of the synthronon which followed the hemicycle of the apse and white marble fragments of the altar table have come to light in the basilica I at Iatrus.¹¹⁹ The single nave basilica at Tsar Krum (second period) contained remains of the stone base of the altar, as well as fragments of the stylobate of the chancel screen.¹²⁰ Finally, limited parts of a three stepped synthronon and of the stylobate of the chancel screen have been found *in situ* in the basilica of Golyamo Belovo.¹²¹

In conclusion, it is obvious that the main traits of the form and paraphernalia of the sanctuary were dictated by the ecclesiastical architecture of the capital to that of the cities in the west shores of the Black Sea, although it is apparent that the liturgical constructions of the sanctuary were bigger in dimensions and wealthier in splendor in Constantinople.

2.2. *The ambo*

The first part of the liturgy in the late antique period included many readings from the Holy Scriptures which were read (or chanted) aloud with solemnity by a cleric who stood on a high platform in the nave of the church.¹²² The cleric, usually a deacon, was visible enough and could be heard by the entire congregation from there. This platform was named ambo (pulpit), because the cleric had to climb up its stairs.¹²³

Unfortunately, scarce remains of ambos have been found in the churches of the Bulgarian shore. Nevertheless, the Old Metropolis of Mesembria (3) probably had an ambo in the sixth century. In addition, an ambo was discovered in the centre of the nave in Djanavara church (15), dated to the initial period of the church. Both seem to belong to the type with opposite flights of stairs leading to an elevated platform.

In Constantinople the ambos belong to the same type and have been found standing in the middle of the nave.¹²⁴ The written sources of the period mention that Saint John Chrysostom occasionally preached to the congregation seated upon the ambo of Hagia Sophia; this ambo should have stood in the middle of the nave of the five-aisled basilica of the saint's time.¹²⁵ The earliest known ambo has been found in the east part

¹¹⁹Hoddinott 1975, 263.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 266.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 298.

¹²²Orlandos 1954, 538.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 538.

¹²⁴For the ambos in Constantinople, see Jakobs 1987, 147-152.

¹²⁵Mathews 1977, 150-151.

of the nave of the Topkapi Sarayi basilica: unfortunately the foundations have been only unearthed.¹²⁶ The church of Saint Polyeuktos had most probably an ambo in the centre of the nave, at about two-thirds of the way from the narthex;¹²⁷ the foundations of the ambo prove that it had two opposite flights of stairs which led to the ambos' platform. Hagia Sofia of the period of Justinian had a similar type of ambo: two flights of stairs at the east and at the west led to the dais which was supported by eight columns. The cantors crowded the space underneath the platform.¹²⁸

The ambos in the basilica of Topkapi Sarayi, in Saint Polyeuktos, in the church of Saint Euphemia and in Hagia Sophia are linked by the balustrade of the *solea* with the entrance of the sanctuary's chancel screen. These *solea* barriers are missing from the churches enrolled in the Bulgarian littoral; hence the liturgical rite of the capital may not have been fully adopted.

2.3. Constructed benches

Along the inferior parts of the walls of the aisles run low constructed benches, the maximum size of which are approximately 0,50m high and 0,45m wide.¹²⁹ In most cases, these banquettes were used by the faithful as sitting places during the long hours of the celebration of the liturgy and the various offices. The south aisle was for men and the north aisle for women.¹³⁰

Unfortunately, there are not many preserved examples of such constructed benches among the churches of the Bulgarian Black Sea shoreline. The only information preserved to date comes from the basilicas in Aphrodisias (21) and Timum (25) in which limestone and marble benches have been unearthed, respectively. The basilica in Callatis (23) had large constructed benches (0.65 - 0.70m) along the long walls. The absence of such a furnishing from the rest of the churches may be explained both by the fact that such benches were not used in the area under study or that, if existed, they were made out of materials which cannot be retained in the soil and, as a result, they leave no trace in the archaeological record. The basilicas of Constantinople, to my knowledge, have not preserved any constructed benches whatsoever.

In the rest of the present-day Bulgaria only in a few cases constructed benches have been encountered: in the north aisle of the basilica of Ljutibrod, in the narthex of basilica B in Berkovica, in the north annex of the basilica at Sliven, and around the nave of the single-nave church at Isperihovo.¹³¹

¹²⁶Mathews 1977, 37.

¹²⁷Ibid., 53.

¹²⁸Ibid., 98.

¹²⁹Orlandos 1954, 435.

¹³⁰Ibid., 436.

¹³¹Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 217-219, fig. 42, 224-226, fig.49, 242, fig. 58, 262, fig. 71, respectively.

2.4. *The fountain of the atrium*

Before they entered the church to attend to the mass, the faithful had to wash their face, hands and feet in the fountains which were located in the atrium, at their very center, or at the east or the west side of it.¹³² This procedure was called ablution and sometimes took the form of a ritual.¹³³

There are not any fountains in the courtyards of the basilicas that I have enrolled. The Old Metropolis in Mesembria (3) is said to have had a fountain in the atrium, but this information is quite late and the water spout may have belonged to the period after the transformation of the church into a mosque. In a few cases the presence of a cistern is noted in the atriums: the Holy Apostles (1) and the south harbor (5) basilicas in Mesembria had a cistern; the basilica in Callatis (23) had in its southwest side a well drainage, in which the rain water was collected.

A fountain in the middle of the atrium associated with the church was discovered in Studios basilica¹³⁴, while Hagia Sofia probably had a splendid marble fountain in the middle of its atrium.¹³⁵ In the rest of the Bulgarian lands, a fountain has been attested only in the courtyard of the atrium in one of the basilicas in Sadanski.¹³⁶

¹³²Orlandos 1954, 112.

¹³³Ibid., 110.

¹³⁴Mathews 1977, 21.

¹³⁵Ibid, 89.Orlandos 1954, 112.

¹³⁶Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 312, fig. 104.

Chapter 3: The Destination of the Churches

3.1. *Episcopal Churches*

Mesembria and Odessos were capital cities and episcopal sees: the ecumenical council of Chalcedon has decreed that Mesembria is recognized as an autocephalous archbishopric under the Patriarchate of Constantinople.¹³⁷ Odessos became bishopric see in 458 AD.¹³⁸ The basilica of Holy Apostles (1) in Mesembria and the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. (16) in Odessos are two churches that could have been used as cathedrals during late antiquity. Both churches are basilicas with more than one building phases. They are located in the center of the urban tissue of the cities and both occupied the site of older ruins. Both basilicas had a *synthronon* in the apse which is needed in cases of liturgy celebrated by bishops. Furthermore, both churches were decorated with marble furnishings and pavements of marble slabs and mosaics.

Both churches draw the origin of their plan and general disposition from the mid-fifth century ecclesiastical architecture of Constantinople as it has come down to us by the Studios and the Chalkoprateia basilicas. Apart from the fact that the fourth- and fifth-century Hagia Sophia was a five-aisle basilica, this church which was the cathedral of the capital city should have had a profound influence upon these two fifth-century basilicas which were founded by high-rank donors, the senator Studios and an empress (Pulcheria or Verina), respectively.¹³⁹ Thus, it can be surmised that the ultimate prototype for both the cathedrals in Mesembria and Odessos has been Hagia Sophia itself, through the later churches of the Studios and Chalkoprateia basilicas.

3.2. *Cemetery Churches*

The funerals and the commemoration services celebrated in graveyards demanded accommodation to cemetery churches. None of the churches under study here can enter this category. Although there are many basilicas in the west Black Sea coast, it is strange enough that no one has been used as a cemetery church.¹⁴⁰

The site of the basilica near the harbor (4) in Mesembria has been later used as a graveyard: thirty seven graves in total have been explored on the east and south sides

¹³⁷ Theoklieva-Stoicheva, 2009, 125

¹³⁸ Atanasov 2011, 319

¹³⁹ Mathews 1977, 19, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Tombs are reported in the west court of the basilica at the north bay (6) in Mesembria, but they are not dated at all; thus, we do not know if they belong to the period under study.

of the church and dated to the middle-byzantine period, i.e. after the abandonment and the remodeling of the late antique church. The late antique basilica at the monastery of Saint John the Baptist (10) on Sv. Ivan Island, to the north of Sozopol, is reported as memorial church for the abbots and monks of the monastery as late as 1263.

If cemetery churches in major cities like Mesembria, Sozopol or Odessos have not yet been localized and explored, then further investigations are needed to take place in the periphery of these cities in the future.

The rest of the Bulgarian lands have preserved a few cemetery memorial churches: the side-chambers of the single-nave church at Ivanjane¹⁴¹ contained tombs under the floors; and in other two cases only the architectural type of the free cross church may indicate a possible use as a memorial church: these are the cases of the churches found at Čärkvište (Klise-Kyoi) and Belovo¹⁴². The shape of the cross may indicate a possible funerary function, but it is not conclusive.

3.3. *Privileged Tombs and Martyr Churches*

In the examined area of this survey probably the only church dedicated to the cult of martyrs is the Djanavara church near Varna (15) which had two memorial places, one underneath the altar, containing relics in sumptuous reliquaries, and the other under the ambo in the nave, containing the burial of some most respected member of the local community – if it was not of a local saint.¹⁴³ These two memorials were linked through a constructed tunnel, which was not accessible from the sanctuary or from the nave: this unique architectural solution can only be explained by the belief in the salvific power of the relics that were kept under the altar and the faith that martyrs and saints will have the boldness to ask redemption from God when the time comes.¹⁴⁴

In the rest of the Bulgarian region, a three-nave basilica was erected upon the ruins of the amphitheater of Markianopolis, constructed with building materials from the amphitheater itself; like in other cases, this specific site has been chosen probably in order to commemorate the martyrs who were martyred there.

¹⁴¹Hoddinott 1975, 279.

¹⁴²Ibid., 242.

¹⁴³This is the so-called «tombe privilégiée» per excellence. See Duval, Picard 1984, *passim*, and particularly the study of J.-P. Sodini (ibid., 233-243).

¹⁴⁴Cf. Enchev 2006.

Conclusions

My investigation regarding the churches founded on the west coasts of the Black Sea, along the coastline of modern Bulgaria, has resulted in collecting twenty-three examples. In particular, eleven churches have been investigated partly or in their totality in towns and sites in the province of Haemimontus, nine in the province of Moesia Secunda and three in the province of Scythia. To the above, two more churches – situated in the town of Callatis, which used to belong to the province of Scythia during the time of our study – must be added.

The greatest church in terms of size has been found in Odessos (Varna): it is the basilica excavated at 34, KhanKrum Str., in the entrance of the city (measuring 43×30 m.). The next big church is the one investigated in the city centre of Mesembria, the basilica of Holy Apostles. Both of these churches were most likely episcopal churches, i.e. the cathedrals. If the church of Holy Apostles in Mesembria was not in fact the episcopal church of the late Roman city, since the church of Saint Sophia is considered to have been the cathedral since its foundation, then it should have been a great pilgrim church. That is because both the episcopal and the pilgrim churches were the largest churches in size in the cities and towns of late Antiquity, as they received all inhabitants who wanted to celebrate the liturgy every Sunday or on special feast days. The smallest church, based on its published architectural plans, is the basilica on the site of Byzone (Kavarna) (measuring 22.5×12 m.).

The architectural type of the three-naved basilica was particularly widespread in all regions of the coasts of the Black Sea. The three-aisle basilica was applied to all sorts of churches, from the biggest ones, such as the afore-mentioned episcopal and pilgrim churches, to the smallest ones, as in the case of the basilica dedicated to the Saints Kosmas and Damianos, whose aisles measure only 1.50 m. in width.

The aisleless churches in the area under investigation are extremely rare: the church excavated on the site of Djanavara, to the southeast of Varna is the sole example, even though it represents a special type of church. No aisleless church is preserved in Constantinople, but this does not mean that there did not exist any. Finally, only very rarely a circumscribed sacred building has been found, although in Constantinople, such round churches became somewhat popular during the fifth and sixth centuries.

The apse has two forms, the semicircular and the three-sided. The semicircular apse has been adopted in the earliest known churches, such as in the church of the Holy Apostles and the Old Cathedral of Mesembria, but the three-sided apses are common from the middle of the fifth century onwards, due to the influence of Constantinople.

The aisles are divided with columns in early examples, like the basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str. in Odessos, which dates back to the beginning of the fifth century, and the Old Cathedral of Mesembria during its first construction phase. In subsequent periods either constructed piers are inserted in the rows of columns or the arcades are resting solely on constructed piers, like in the later construction phases of these two aforementioned churches. In Constantinople, the first known basilica with masonry piers inserted in the colonnades is the church of Saint Polyeuctos (dated before 528), but in this case the piers served to support the arches that hold the vaults and dome of the nave and the vaults of the aisles. The churches of the Bulgarian coasts under study use constructed piers in the place of columns even if the timber roof of these churches had not underwent any change. This means that, already from the first half of the sixth century, either the trade of marble architectural members in the Black Sea must have been unaffordable or that the quarries gradually stopped operating and the production of marble parts considerably decreased.

The three-aisle basilicas in Constantinople were transformed under imperial funding into domed and vaulted churches, especially after the so-called “Nika riot” (532). On the contrary, in the three provinces comprehended in this study, the type of the three-nave timber-roofed basilica prevailed from the sixth century onwards. Probably there was not any imperial aid or high-rank donors in the cities of the west shores of the Black Sea that could afford the erection of large domed basilicas; the first known church with a dome is Saint John in Mesembria, dated to the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century.¹⁴⁵

The churches of the Bulgarian coasts had narthexes of the same width as the *naos* and followed its tripartite division; there are few recorded cases of the atrium, like in the second construction phase of the church of the Old Cathedral in Mesembria. If we are not misled by the known and published material, in very few cases a baptismal font has been placed inside the narthex, since a special baptistery had not been built.

The liturgical constructions, as seldom as they appear to have been preserved, present close affinities with those of the churches in Constantinople. Altars and chancel screens, as well as ambos have been mounted from parts made of Proconnesian marble but they were smaller in size and with a simpler decoration, compared to the ones still preserved in the capital.

The episcopal basilicas of Mesembria and Odessos are situated in the centre of the urban tissue of the two late antique cities, have adopted the same architectural type and their large size could accommodate a large congregation. In Constantinople, the churches of Hagia Sophia and Hagia Eirene, which from the start were the churches of the archbishopric (and later of the Patriarchate), were located near the centre of the old city of Byzantium, next to the *Strategion*. The expansion of the city under Constantine the Great placed these episcopal churches at some distance from the new center of the city, at the beginning of the *Mese*, the main street to the capital. Hagia

¹⁴⁵Mijatev 1974, 100-101, figs. 104-106. Cf. also Vocotopoulos 1992, 125 note 1, 157, 161 note 2.

Sophia was a five-aisle basilica from its foundation in the fourth century until 532; Hagia Eirene is only known from its reconstruction phase under Justinian. The model that most likely became the architectural prototype for the episcopal churches of the cities in the west coastal zone of the Black Sea is obviously the one adopted by the Stoudios and the Chalkoprateia basilicas; it can be surmised though that these two churches could have been influenced by Hagia Sophia in many aspects.

None of the sacred buildings under consideration here has been a cemetery church. It is particularly strange that cities such like Mesembria and Odessos, which constituted important ecclesiastical centers and where a great number of churches are unearthed, did not have any cemetery churches. Nevertheless, this can mainly be attributed to the research so far carried out, as the cemetery churches of these cities should be sought outside the city walls and at some distance from them.

Finally, the temple on the site of Djanavara in Varna, because of its location and its architectural type, could be considered to have been dedicated to a martyr or for the burial of a particularly highly revered person of the city. Its masonry constitutes a special case due to its great thickness. Unfortunately, the extensive restoration works that the church underwent since its excavation do not permit any further theorization. Its rich interior decoration could provide the trigger for more extensive study.

To sum up, from all that has been put forward after the study of the ecclesiastical architecture and the conclusions that followed the analysis of its components, we could quite safely claim that the churches on the west coasts of the Black Sea do not represent copies or replicas of the architectural models adopted in Constantinople. The churches examined here were deeply influenced by the ecclesiastical architecture of the capital, but adopted only some of its features in a selective way. The churches of the provinces of Haemimontus, Moesia Secunda and Scythia never achieved the character or the grandeur of the churches of Constantinople. What is more, it seems that in several cases the influence that was exercised on them originated from other areas as well, like the Aegean coasts and islands. Moreover, specific architectural types, like the circumscribed sacred buildings, were not preferred at all, if the published material does not mislead us. Thus, it appears that the northern provinces of the late Empire were only moderately influenced by Constantinople and were not entirely assimilated by it.

Within the limited scope of this dissertation, it was not possible for me to study all the parameters which emerged during my research. I believe that in the future a thorough investigation of the churches of the coasts of the Black Sea as a whole, without the limitation of modern national borders, in the context of the provinces of the late Empire, would offer a more complete picture. Furthermore, my study was carried out in comparison with the churches of Constantinople, but a comparative study with other regions, as well, such as the churches of the Mediterranean and Syria, would add more evidence regarding the influences of the church-building in the Black Sea.

PROVINCE OF HAEMIMONTUS

NESEBĀR (MESEMBRIA)

1. Basilica of Holy Apostles¹⁴⁶

1st phase: At ca. 140 m to the East of the main west gate of the city-walls, a church has been found in trial trenches implemented in 1959, 1963 and 2002.¹⁴⁷ Parts of the apse, south aisle, northwest corner of the nave and bits of the narthex have been uncovered (**fig. 1**). The church, which allegedly was dedicated to the Holy Apostles, is a three-aisle basilica; an apse protrudes from the east wall and a narthex lies to the west. The total approximate dimensions are 43 by 20 m; the nave is about 10 m wide and the south aisle 4.25 m wide. Unfortunately, the main part of the nave and the north aisle run underneath the main road of the modern city.¹⁴⁸ No trial trenches have been carried out to the west in order to verify the existence of an atrium. A big cistern and water pipes have been uncovered to the southeast of the church.¹⁴⁹

It has been surmised that the original apse formed a hemicycle on the interior and the exterior;¹⁵⁰ this today cannot be verified, because the apse is in a bad state of preservation and the trench has been partially refilled. The south stylobate made of rubble masonry¹⁵¹ forms the foundation for ten columns that run between the nave and the south aisle;¹⁵² only four column bases have been found, two *in situ* resting on large cut stones.¹⁵³ The columns were bestowed with ionic capitals.¹⁵⁴ The sanctuary area extends up to the third column from the east, according to the published

¹⁴⁶ Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 127-132, 154-157, figs. 1-11, 51-59, with earlier bibliography.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 127, with references.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 79-81.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 130.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., figs 6-7.

¹⁵² Theoklieva-Stoycheva (ibid., 127, 130-131) insists on the existence of eleven columns in the initial phase of the south colonnade but the intercolumniations of the published plan cannot support this suggestion.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 128 and n. 349, 154-155 nos. 1-4, figs. 51-54.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 155-156 nos. 6-7, figs. 56-57.

plan.¹⁵⁵ The pilasters that protrude from the northwest pier of the nave indicate that the narthex was possibly divided into three bays from the start.

Date: Although a date to the first half of the fifth century has been proposed,¹⁵⁶ the column bases that have been uncovered have a distinctively sixth-century treatment and profile,¹⁵⁷ and the ionic capitals, which come from this church, present many similarities with capitals from Greece dated to the age of Justinian.¹⁵⁸ Thus a date to the end of the fifth or the first half of the sixth century may be closer to the truth.

2nd phase: After a serious damage, caused possibly by the earthquake of 557, the apse and the south aisle of the church were totally reconstructed. The published shape of the apse is misleading; in fact it is semicircular on the interior and faced to the outside by three sides of an octagon. Doric column shafts and other worked stones, all made of poros, which belonged to a ruined ancient building, may have been used for the new altar itself or the canopy.¹⁵⁹ The east and south walls of the south aisle were rebuilt with a regular *opus mixtum* masonry,¹⁶⁰ consisting of alternating zones of poros quoins and at least three brick lays; a peculiar opening (4 m wide) has been uncovered near the east end of the wall. The uncovered walls are 0.95 m thick and conserved up to a height of 0.65-0.75 m.¹⁶¹ A rectangular annex is added to the south side of the narthex; its east and north walls seem to bond with the walls of the church.¹⁶² The south colonnade was not altogether removed, as is believed, since two of the column bases have been found *in situ*, two pillars, constructed entirely with bricks and mortar (dim. 1.57 x 0.92 m each),¹⁶³ are found resting upon the stylobate in the east end of the colonnade; it is probable that there was some kind of alternation between constructed piers and columns. The south aisle was paved with marble slabs.¹⁶⁴

Date: Although a date during the reign of the Emperor Anastasios has been proposed for the reconstruction of the church,¹⁶⁵ it is conceivable that it cannot be dated earlier than the second half of the sixth century, probably in the last years of the reign of Justinian or right afterwards.

¹⁵⁵ Theoklieva-Stoycheva must have wrongly identified the stylobate of the south arcade with the stylobate of the chancel screen (ibid., 128).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 154-155 nos. 1-4, figs. 51-54. Most of the comparisons cited by the author are dated to the sixth rather than the fifth century.

¹⁵⁸ Véli 1989, 73-74 nos. 73-74, 184 no. 274.

¹⁵⁹ Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 128, 156 nos. 7-8, figs. 57-58.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 127-128.

¹⁶² Ibid., 128.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 129. In the layers that covered the pavement three objects made of ivory have been found; two of them, a small Corinthian capital and a miniature column drum, may have belonged to the decoration of a wooden box.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 131.

2. Early Christian Church under the church of Saint George¹⁶⁶

At the southeast edge of the peninsula, marble *spolia* on land and in sea indicate that an Early Christian church occupied the site before 1704, when a church dedicated to Saint George was founded.¹⁶⁷ An acclamatory inscription mentioning Emperor Justinian was reused in the construction of the late church.¹⁶⁸ Trial trenches on the site have partly revealed the foundations of the original basilica (?), which have in part precipitated into the sea along with segments of the southeast city walls.¹⁶⁹ Two small column shafts might belong to the canopy above the altar,¹⁷⁰ while a Corinthian column capital, which comes from a colonnade, is to be dated to the first half of the sixth century.¹⁷¹

3. Old Metropolis or Saint Sophia

1st phase: The church was dedicated to Saint Sophia, like Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, probably from the beginning, and served as the episcopal church of the city at least during the middle Byzantine period. It is situated in the center of the settlement near the ancient agora above the ruins of an ancient temple.¹⁷² Originally it was a three-aisle timber roofed basilica with galleries, narthex and atrium¹⁷³ (**fig. 2**). The total dimensions of the original basilica were 25.50 m by 20.20 m (without the apse and the rests of the atrium). The nave was 10 m wide, while each aisle was 4.40 m wide.¹⁷⁴ Apart from the old publication by A. Rašenov¹⁷⁵ and the reconstruction of the original plan of the church by St. Boyadžiev,¹⁷⁶ there is no detailed study of the masonry and the extent of the repairs or reconstructions of the walls which are obvious to any careful observer. It is believed that the outer walls of the church belong to the initial construction, from the foundations to the pediment, and that only the two arcades carried by stone and brick piers belong to a ninth-century rebuilding phase.¹⁷⁷ It is quite recognizable though from photographs and published section plans that only in the low parts of the outer walls cut stones and mortar in regular rows are used;¹⁷⁸ the upper parts are constructed with small ashlar blocks and bricks in

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 147-148, 181-183 nos. 92-97, figs. 107-110.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 147 and n. 437.

¹⁶⁸Mijatev 1974, 15-16 figs. 4-6. Theoklieva-Stoycheva (ibid.) believes that the church was dedicated to the Nativity of Christ because of the ligature ΧΜΓ inscribed on the first line of the inscription. It is controversial though whether this ligature means "Christ is born by the Virgin Mary". Cf. Feissel 1983, 43-44 no. 25.

¹⁶⁹Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 148.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 182 nos. 95-96, fig. 109.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 181 no. 92, fig. 107. Kautsch, 1936, 78.

¹⁷²Vanderheyde 2012, 7.

¹⁷³Boyadjiev 1962, 322-323.

¹⁷⁴Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 132.

¹⁷⁵Rašenov 1932.

¹⁷⁶Boyadjiev 1962.

¹⁷⁷Krautheimer 1986, 268. Vocotopoulos 2011, 27. Vanderheyde 2012, 7.

¹⁷⁸This is quite obvious in the east wall in Boyadjiev's section plan (1962, 337, fig. 2 and Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, fig. 14).

irregularly alternating bands, although in the ashlar bands small or broken bricks are also randomly used. At least one post of the late antique chancel barrier is walled up in the east wall and another one in the north clerestory.¹⁷⁹

The semicircular apse is believed to belong to the initial construction phase: the semi-dome is constructed with bricks in concentric rows and terminates in a double vault-head arch that rests on the jambs in recess, a characteristic that is common from the sixth through the eleventh centuries.¹⁸⁰ The apse is faced to the outside by three sides of a hexagon, which presumes a quite detailed plan and attentive construction. Three low but large single-lobed windows are opened in the cylinder, each in the center of every side. A three-stepped synthronon rises amphitheatrically along the curve of the apse.

Date: The construction of the Old Metropolis is thought to date to the middle of the fifth century, after the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, when Mesembria was recognized as an autocephalous archbishopric depending from the See of Constantinople.¹⁸¹ The main argument for such an early date is based on the similarities between the dimensions and general arrangements of the plan and that of the Studios basilica in Constantinople, which was erected in 453.¹⁸² The few architectural members that have been found in the excavations of the church cannot be connected to the church superstructure.¹⁸³ A composite Corinthian capital that conceivably comes from a colonnade has been dated to the fifth century¹⁸⁴ – a date in the first half of the sixth century is apparently closer to the truth.¹⁸⁵ An ambo was probably added to the nave as well with a two opposite flight of stairs to the east and to the west during the sixth century.¹⁸⁶

2nd phase: In a subsequent construction phase an atrium in the form of a peristyle has been added to the west. Only some parts of the north stylobate and the outer west wall have been unearthed; the porticos were paved with brick tiles. It is surmised that the atrium had four porticoes and that the east one was later transformed into a narthex, but the arguments are inconclusive.¹⁸⁷ An ionic capital which is kept at the Archaeological museum, probably comes from the atrium; the capital is adorned with a monogram containing according to the bibliography the names of Justinian and Theodora, but it does not resemble the monograms of the imperial couple that are carved on the capitals of Hagia Sophia.¹⁸⁸ The monogram though has all the characteristics of the justinianic era. Shortly afterwards an annex has been added

¹⁷⁹Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, figs. 131-132.

¹⁸⁰Vocotopoulos 1992, 154-155, with conclusive examples.

¹⁸¹Stanev, Zhdrakov 2009, 87.

¹⁸²Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 135-136. For the Studios basilica, cf. Mathews 1977, 19-27 and Mango 1978.

¹⁸³Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 185-186 nos. 104-106, 193-194 no. 130, figs. 117-118, 141.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 185 no. 103, fig. 116.

¹⁸⁵Kautsch 1936, 59,60.

¹⁸⁶Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 186-187 nos. 107-109, figs. 119-121.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 134.

¹⁸⁸Vanderheyde 2012, 7, figs. 6a-b.

outside the northwest angle of the narthex; the south wall of the room is the north outer wall of the atrium. This annex was paved with mosaics and is thought to have served as a baptistery,¹⁸⁹ but no baptismal font has been found whatsoever. A symmetrical room is believed to flank the south side of the church, but it has not yet been uncovered. At the west entrance of the atrium a propylon has been constructed probably with a vault resting upon four columns or four pillars.¹⁹⁰

Date: The major part of the preserved marble furnishings of the church date to the sixth century; if the nave and aisles were constructed in the first half of the sixth century, the atrium must have been added sometime later in the century.

During the early ninth-century remodeling of the church, the colonnades were removed and two arcades with constructed pillars have been set. The roofs of the aisles were lowered, since the galleries were eliminated, as well as the atrium, annex and propylon. From this remodeling only two slabs from the chancel screen and some slabs from the ambo have been discovered.¹⁹¹ Only the *phiale* of the church, of which no trace has been found, was still standing among the debris in the west open court until the World War II.¹⁹²

4. Basilica near the north port

1st phase: The church is situated on the artificial terrace adjoining the north harbor at the northwest edge of the settlement. It was erected partly above the ruins of the temple of Zeus and of a tower of the Hellenistic fortification.¹⁹³ The church is a three-aisle timber-roofed basilica (**fig. 3**), measuring 27.60 m by 20.80 m. It is constructed with poros and lime stones with mortar, and bricks used at random. The nave is 9.26 m wide while both aisles are 3.70 m wide. A semicircular apse protrudes from the east and a tripartite narthex, 6 m wide, lies to the west;¹⁹⁴ there was not enough space for the erection of an atrium, because to the west of the church runs the west arm of the city-walls. The perimeter walls and the two stylobates, preserved only up to 0.20-0.30 m above the floors, are all 1.20 m thick; this unusual width indicates either that the erection of the church has been problematic from the start or that there have been some later reinforcements of the foundations. The nave was paved with marble slabs from earlier blocks. It is believed that there were galleries over the aisles and narthex but no traces of a staircase have been found.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 135-136.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 135.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., figs. 122-125.

¹⁹² Ibid., 135 and n. 378.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 138.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 139, 140.

A small cross-shaped crypt has been found on the north side of the sanctuary; it is reached by a stair entering from the east side.¹⁹⁶ The crypt has the shape of the relic crypts of the Studios and the Chalkoprateia basilicas in Constantinople,¹⁹⁷ but its position on the flank of the sanctuary is peculiar. It might have been used for a side-altar, other than the main altar of the church, which should have been erected in the middle of the sanctuary area. The crypt may have been used as a hideout for precious vessels or precious reliquaries.¹⁹⁸ It is a pity that the main altar has not been found because of the later occupation of the site.

Date: The erection of the basilica has been dated to the second half of the fifth century,¹⁹⁹ although the only column base published from the church has a striking sixth-century treatment and profile.²⁰⁰ The stamped bricks, one of which bears the name of Justinian, which have been found in the church, might belong from this period.²⁰¹ The most probable date for the foundation of the church is the period of Justinian, as the stamped brick attest.

Later phases: After a serious damage, caused possibly by an earthquake and/or a fire, the timber roofs of the church were replaced by constructed vaults. The walls of the church were reinforced with segments of walls set in the aisles, sideways and endways to the stylobates, and piers in the corners of the nave, aisles and narthex partitions. It seems that the church has been transformed into a cross-in-square church. The center of the church may have been covered with a dome.²⁰² This second phase of the basilica has been dated after 557, but when exactly is not possible to say; if the church has been transformed into a cross-in-square church, then this transformation most likely took place during the tenth century or afterwards.

After the collapse or the desertion of the cross-in-square church, a small single-nave basilica has been erected in the nave. To the east and south of this church thirty-seven graves dated to the middle-byzantine period have been excavated.²⁰³

5. South Harbor Basilica

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 138-139, figs. 20-21.

¹⁹⁷Mathews 1977, 27, fig. 10 and 32-33, fig. 15, respectively.

¹⁹⁸Theoklieva-Stoycheva (2009, 139) mentions that a marble reliquary in the form of a sarcophagus has been found inside the crypt. It is surmised by her (ibid., 139, 141) that the crypt was originally a baptismal font, but no water pipes or other hydraulic devices are published to support this suggestion (the water-pipes that have been unearthed from the area of the church are dated to earlier periods: ibid., 159 nos. 19-22). It is probable that the author thinks that the cross-in-square church was the first Christian building on the site (ibid., 141), replaced by the three-aisle basilica with no conclusive arguments.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 141.

²⁰⁰Ibid., 157 no. 10, fig. 60, where it is stated that it has been found to the west of the narthex.

²⁰¹Ibid., 158-159, nos. 14-18.

²⁰²Ibid., 142.

²⁰³Ibid., 140, 141.

Many architectural members originating from an Early Christian church have been found on the site of the late byzantine church of Saint John Aleitourgetos near the south port of the city.²⁰⁴ An excavation in the court around the church has revealed a cistern, parts of a building complex and portions of the city walls, thus no religious constructions whatsoever. Three column shafts coming from colonnades, six ionic capitals, two marble piers from a chancel screen, and nine column bases dated to the sixth century,²⁰⁵ might have belonged to a church of the justinianic era, unless they were gathered on the spot for the erection of the late byzantine church or for a probable repair of the fortification of the harbor.

6. Church at the north bay (catholikon of the Theotokos Eleousa monastery)

At the north bay of the peninsula an Early Christian three-aisle basilica, measuring 28 m by 18m, is supposed to have been the catholikon of the Theotokos Eleousa monastery (**fig. 4**).²⁰⁶ The nave is flanked by aisles that terminate to the east in trefoils; only the south trefoil has been fully excavated and restored, the north one has not been preserved. The main apse of the church is semi-circular on the interior and to the outside is closed in three sides of a hexagon. The nave and the south aisle are divided by a set of four piers constructed with poros blocks and random bricks, while the north aisle is secluded by a wall preserved up to some centimeters above the pavement; a passageway is supposed to have existed in the west end of this wall in accordance to the west intercolumniation of the south arcade.²⁰⁷ The narthex, 5.56 m wide, is tripartite; the south compartment has an irregular west wall, which in another published plan was designed with a snail set of stairs.²⁰⁸ The west wall of the narthex has an opening in the center; a corridor flanked by two rectangular annexes leads to this entrance.²⁰⁹ Many tombs have been excavated in the west court.²¹⁰

Date: A fragment of a marble slab from the sanctuary barrier and some stamped bricks with the name of Justinian bespeak for a sixth-century date.²¹¹

²⁰⁴Ibid., 148-149, with earlier bibliography.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 169-178, figs. 83-103.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 142-143, 147. Vanderheyde 2012, 7.

²⁰⁷Theoklieva-Stoycheva (2009, 144) suggests that in an earlier construction phase nave and aisles were separated by colonnades, which lacks any foundation.

²⁰⁸Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 231 fig. 53a.

²⁰⁹Theoklieva-Stoycheva 2009, 142-143.

²¹⁰Ibid., 145.

²¹¹Ibid., 145, 161-162 nos. 30-35, fig. 64. Vanderheyde 2012, 7.

SOZOPOL

7. Basilica at 8, Ribarska Str.

At 8, Ribarska Str., in the northwest part of the city, close to the chapel dedicated to Saint Athanasios, a well-proportioned basilica was discovered in the nineties. The church is 23m long and 14m wide. The narthex, 4m long, is divided in three parts by pairs of pilasters protruding from the wall. The west entrance, 2m wide, is opened in the center of the west wall of the narthex.²¹²

8. Basilica of the Mother of God

On the island of Sv. Ivan to the north of Sozopol, the remains of a basilica dedicated to the Mother of God have been uncovered. According to the finds, the church is dated between the end of the fifth and the sixth century.²¹³

9. Basilica under the cathedral of Saint George

In the center of the city of Sozopol the post-byzantine cathedral dedicated to Saint George has been built above the northwest part of an Early Christian church, possibly a basilica, partially unearthed at 25, Sv. Kirill i Methodiy Str. in 1949.²¹⁴ Parts of the narthex and the nave were discovered. According to the reconstruction plan of the church,²¹⁵ the apse was semicircular and the sanctuary area was at least two steps higher than the pavement of the nave. Two rows of three constructed piers separated the nave from the aisles and a narthex was added to the west. At least one entrance was opened in the north side of the narthex and another, possibly the main entrance to the church, was opened in the center of its west wall. A clerestory with at least four windows could have run at the top zone of the long walls of the nave, bellow the timber roof. Fragments of marble mullions uncovered on the site are the only remains that have been given a late antique date;²¹⁶ a small fragment of an impost (?) decorated with fames in a row has been dated to the eighth or ninth century;²¹⁷ small marble pillars and slabs from the chancel barrier and the ambo can be surely dated to the twelfth century.²¹⁸ A fragment of a small marble pillar originating from a late antique chancel barrier has been recently published.²¹⁹

²¹²Panayotova, Drazheva 2003, 233.

²¹³Ibid., 224, 233.

²¹⁴Velkov 1964, 43-45. Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 235. Panayiotova, Drazheva 2003, 224.

²¹⁵Panayiotova, Drazheva 2003, 224, fig. 6.

²¹⁶Velkov 1964, 49 no. 5.

²¹⁷Ibid., 46 no. 7, fig. 3a.

²¹⁸Ibid., 47-51 nos. 8-13, figs. 3b-7.

²¹⁹Vanderheyde, Prochaska 2011, 356 no. 1, fig. 1.

Chaneva-Dechevska is right that it is highly improbable that the slabs belonged to the chancel barrier of the late antique church,²²⁰ because the representation of griffons is commonly used either in Roman or the middle byzantine periods.²²¹ Votive tablets dated to Roman times originating from a temple of the Thracian Horse Rider²²² have been also found on the site. Thus, the sculpture material offers very thin evidence for the date of the late antique church; if the mullions can be dated to the fifth or sixth centuries and they do not originate from some other ancient or Roman building, then the church could have been founded during the period of Justinian. According to Drazheva and Milanova, the church should have been erected between the ninth and the eleventh centuries and had a final period in the fourteenth century before the destruction of the city by Amadeus of Savoy in 1366.²²³

In 1453, when the Ottomans conquered the town, the basilica was destroyed. In 1697, because of the Ottoman legislation, the church was reconstructed only in part by bishop Kallinikos. Finally, in 1863, it was entirely reconstructed and decorated by bishop Procopios. The final renovation was made by the National Institute on Cultural Monuments in the 1980's.²²⁴

10. Basilica of the monastery of Saint John the Baptist

On the south shore of the Sv. Ivan Island, at 1km to the north of Sozopol peninsula, a three aisled basilica has been excavated from 1985 up to date.²²⁵ The basilica occupies the south east part of the monastery of Saint John the Baptist, which has been erected in 1262 by *kontostavlos* Michael Glavas Tarchaniotes.²²⁶

1st phase: From the earliest phase of the church only parts of the original three-sided apse have been unearthed. It was possibly a three-aisled basilica with a narthex added to the west, the walls of which run underneath the later basilica. In 2010, under the constructed pier that supported the altar table a small poros reliquary (**fig. 5b**) has been found; on its base a Greek invocation inscription has been engraved at the time of its deposition under the altar: *Κ(ύρι)εβο/ήθητὸ/νδοῦλ/ωνσου/ Θομᾶν* (**fig. 5c**). On the other sides of this reliquary the name of Saint John is mentioned as well as the date 24th of June, which is the feast day of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist.²²⁷ This first church has been dated to the beginning of the fifth century.

²²⁰Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 235.

²²¹Bouras 1983, 45-51. Interestingly enough Panayiotova and Drazheva (2003, 224) relate a renovation of the church (?) or a foundation of a new one to the north of the late antique ruins in the ninth or tenth centuries.

²²²Dimitrov 2007, 173.

²²³Cf. Vanderheyde, Prochaska 2011, 355, with earlier bibliography.

²²⁴Dimitrov 2007, 283.

²²⁵Dimova et al. 1990, 194.

²²⁶George Pachymeres, XI 7.

²²⁷Dimitrov s.d., 23. Popkonstantinov et al. 2011. For the feast day of the birth of Prodrimos, cf. Delehay 1902 (1954), 767.

2nd phase: The reasons for the demolition of the first church have not yet been specified. The outer walls of the church have been reconstructed on top of the old ones and a new apse has been erected to the east of the original eastern wall of the church.(fig. 5a) The new apse is semicircular and the sanctuary area extends to the west above the debris which covered the original apse. A new marble reliquary in the form of a small sarcophagus was found in 2010 beneath the altar table; it was placed within an *enkainion* cist constructed with bricks.²²⁸ The sanctuary barrier was linear and extended between the first pair of pillars which divided the nave from the aisles. The clerestory and the wooden roof of the nave rested upon two rows of four piers.²²⁹ The south aisle seems to have had an entrance in its east wall and its pavement made of brick tiles might have been disturbed by at least one tomb. The north aisle seems somewhat narrower and it communicated with the narthex through an opening in its west wall. This phase can be possibly dated to the second half of the sixth century.

Later phases: It has been suggested that the basilica underwent three major periods of reconstruction, the latest of which is dated to the early seventeenth century.²³⁰ After the erection of the new catholicon of the thirteenth century the basilica became the cemetery church of the monastery.²³¹ To these reconstructions may belong the erection of an apsidal room at the east end of the north aisle, the addition of an apse to the outside of the east end of the south aisle and the fragmentation of the original narthex. Piers in the northeast and northwest corners of the narthex as well as new constructed pilasters attest a major change of the roofing system; the timber roof has been replaced by constructed vaults sometime during the Byzantine period. To the southwest an annex might have belonged to the first or the second phase of the church.

11. St. Marina

St. Marina's church is located a kilometer away the town. It is believed that it is erected upon the remains of an ancient temple which was probably dedicated to the Great Mother goddess.²³²

PROVINCE OF MOESIA SECUNDA

BYALA, CAPE SV. ATANAS

12. Basilica

²²⁸ Dimitrov s.d., 23 and fig. Popkonstantonov et al. 2011, 500-504.

²²⁹ Popkonstantinov et al. 2010.

²³⁰ Dimova et al. 1990, 195.

²³¹ Dimitrov s.d., 10.

²³² Dimitrov 2007, 175

On the eastern edge of the triangular fortress uncovered in the Cape Sv. Atanas, to the south of Byala, a three-aisled basilica and its annexes have been excavated during the last years of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Valery Iotov and Alexander Minchev provided us with an interesting overview of the church buildings.²³³

1st phase: The church is a three aisled basilica with a protruding semicircular apse to the east and a narthex to the west. The sanctuary has a Pi-shaped chancel screen. Two rows of six columns each separate the nave and aisles. Two doors on either side of the apse give access from the aisles to the area behind the church. Three openings for doorways are preserved in the east wall of the narthex. The main entrance to the church has been opened in the middle of the west side (**fig. 6**). This phase has been dated to the late fourth or the beginning of the fifth century.

Iotov and Minchev have suggested that a baptismal font unearthed in the north half of the narthex belongs to this first construction phase.²³⁴ The presence of this font at such early phase seems highly problematic. Baptismal fonts inserted in the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica at Novae and in the north part of the narthex in the Galata basilica (Odessos) are later transformations; it seems thus possible that the insertion of a baptismal font at the north half of the narthex of this basilica belongs also to a later phase (**fig. 7**).²³⁵

2nd phase: At the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century the church was partially destroyed and rebuilt. It is conceivable that the limestone column bases and shafts as well as their Corinthian capitals can be dating from this period. The altar table and the canopy above it can be dated to this period as well.²³⁶ All the pavements are made with brick tiles. Many fragments of glass windows and lead frames have been found in all parts of the church.

To the north of the church a baptistery was built during this period.²³⁷ It consisted of two rooms with entrances from the south. The east room contained a cross-shaped baptismal font which was set within a pavement of clay tiles (**fig. 8**). During the Justinianic period, or a little later, the font underwent a renovation: in the center of the cross arms a small basin formed by stone slabs may have been used for baptizing infants. To the south of the church an oblong hall was added. Parallel to its south wall, the basement of a rectangular house attributed to the priests of the church has been explored.²³⁸ To the east of the baptistery a well dug into the rock has been explored.²³⁹

3rd phase: To the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century a four-stepped synthronon was constructed amphitheatrically along the curve of the apse. It seems that the baptistery has been destroyed or abandoned for some reason and a new

²³³ Iotov, Minchev 2013, 20-28.

²³⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

²³⁵ Achim 2003-2004, 17 no. 27, fig. 25 and 18 no. 30, fig. 27, respectively with earlier bibliography.

²³⁶ Cf. the reconstruction of the church proposed by the figs. in Iotov, Minchev 2013, 22.

²³⁷ Ibid., 24.

²³⁸ Iotov, Minchev 2013, 25.

²³⁹ Ibid., 26.

baptismal font was constructed in the north half of the narthex. The corresponding entrance to the north aisle has been closed with the construction of a small apse and a new transverse wall closed from the south the room, which was the new baptistery of the church. To the west a small building could have been used as a sacristy. Some insignificant additions have been made to the west of the south oblong building (**figs. 9a-b, 10**).

BYZONE/KAVARNA

13. Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian

An inscription found in the city of Byzzone mentions the existence of a church dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian.²⁴⁰ (**fig.11**), According to the published plan, the basilica had three aisles, a protruding semicircular apse to the east and a narthex to the west. Only the two stylobates have been unearthed in the basilica; nevertheless, its total dimensions have been estimated: the basilica was 19m long and 12m wide. The narthex formed a single space room 12m long by 4m wide.

VARNA (ODESSOS)

14. Cape Charakman church

After the abandonment of Dionysopolis or Byzzone the inhabitants moved to Cape Charakman. There, remains of defending structures as well as the foundations of a three-aisle basilica have been found. The church had a single semicircular apse on the east and a narrow narthex added to the west. The width of the nave is 5.65m and that of the aisles 2m. The church has been dated to the fifth century without strong arguments.²⁴¹

15. Djanavar Tepe

The Djanavara church (**figs. 12a-c**) is a single-nave church with projecting north and south annexes that on the east side form a rectilinear wall in the width of which the apse is inscribed; the narthex is a narrow room that occupies the west part of the nave.²⁴² The total external dimensions are 31m by 28m, including the towers to the

²⁴⁰Minchev 2006, 253.

²⁴¹Hoddinott 1975, 333.

²⁴²Ibid., 325.

east and west. It is surmised that to the west lies an unexcavated atrium, 25m wide, which is not included in the total dimensions of the church. The single-nave church is built of massive walls which obviously support a vault with a flat or low-sloped roof.²⁴³ Two staircases are formed on the sides of the apse, which indicate the existence of a second floor for the annexes, if not for the nave and sanctuary itself. This has led to speculations that the church is constructed according to models originating from the Near East countries during late antiquity.²⁴⁴ The floor of the nave and the floors of all the annexes were paved with mosaics; a large ambo stands in the center of the nave.²⁴⁵

Beneath the single-nave basilica, two vaulted crypts connected by a tunnel have been explored. The vaulted chamber under the altar is a crypt with a special niche in the east side.²⁴⁶ Three reliquaries made of alabaster, silver and gold contained the one into the other have been discovered in this niche.²⁴⁷ The second crypt has been unearthed beneath the base of the marble ambo: it was a brick vaulted tomb containing a coffin with the bones of an adult male; it was probably used as a place of devotion in the middle of the nave.²⁴⁸ The two crypts indicate that in the Djanavara church was built to enclose two distinct places of veneration: the niche under the altar with the relics and the tomb of this unique individual under the ambo. The tomb under the ambo may have been a saintly local cleric (?), while the crypt under the altar contained relics of martyrs which are thought to have salvific powers.²⁴⁹

The church had a baptistery located at the northwest rectangular annex²⁵⁰. The entrance to the baptistery was at its south side, through a doorway which connected the baptistery to the narthex. It is likely that the narthex was used as the vestibule of the baptistery²⁵¹. The baptistery was decorated with wall-paintings containing floral motifs²⁵². The shape of the baptismal font was cylindrical inscribed in a cross-shaped outline and the entrance to it comprised of four stairs, two on each side, facing each other²⁵³. The baptismal font was located in the centre of the baptistery and it was riveted with marble²⁵⁴.

Date: The Early Christian Djanavara church is dated to the late fifth or the early sixth century²⁵⁵.

²⁴³ Georgiev 2006, 295.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 295.

²⁴⁵ Hoddinott 1975, 325.

²⁴⁶ Georgiev 2006, 296.

²⁴⁷ Minchev 2006, 247-248.

²⁴⁸ There is not any information regarding the shape of the pulpit. Cf. Georgiev 2006, 297.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 299. The reliquaries were adorned with gems: sapphire, emerald and garnet. The set held a valuable relic - a human bone and a piece of wood. Cf. ibid., 296.

²⁵⁰ Achim 2003-2004, 18.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., 7.

²⁵³ Ibid., 8.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

²⁵⁵ Achim 2003-2004, 18.

16. Early Christian Basilica at 34, Khan Krum Str.

1st phase: Between 2002-2004 three Early Christian basilicas were discovered at 34, Khan Krum Str. They were erected the one above the ruins of the other from the early fifth up to the sixth century; the churches of the second and third periods can be identified with the cathedral of the city²⁵⁶ (**fig. 13**). Some earlier structures were found underneath the basilicas.²⁵⁷ The results of the excavation of this basilica have not yet been fully published.²⁵⁸

The first basilica (no.1) consisted of an apse, three aisles of small dimensions and probably a narthex, as well. It was founded in the early fifth century but after a short period of time it was seriously damaged, possibly by an earthquake. The apse and part of the north aisle and the nave have been unearthed under the later constructions. Expensive imported multicolored marble plaques, a multicolored mosaic floor, and murals have been found from this church.²⁵⁹

2nd phase: The second (no.2) church is a three-ailed basilica erected above the ruins of the previous church, which has been found under the south part of it. The basilica had a protruding apse, a narthex and an exonarthex added to the west. An altar table made of stone masonry stood in the center of the apse; in front of the sanctuary, a marble chancel screen has been located. Finally, a narrow synthronon was built along the curve of the apse. A crypt, about 1.40m long and 1.06m wide,²⁶⁰ was located in the southern part of the sanctuary under the mosaic floor:²⁶¹ it consisted of two cases which formed an oblong constructed cist. A marble column base was reused to cover approximately the half of the crypt. A rectangular limestone reliquary box, containing a bottle-shaped marble vessel with a cover, was discovered under this column base. Inside the vessel, some relics have been found²⁶² (**fig. 14**).

As far as the rectangular reliquary box is concerned, it was 34.6cm long by 21.5cm wide and 18.5cm high.²⁶³ It was originally made of local white–yellowish limestone. The small marble vessel consisted of two pieces, the body and the lid. The body was a spherical container while the lid was a cone-shaped movable cover with a profiled handle.²⁶⁴ It had a grey-beige shade, with a pink and reddish hue coloring the outside. The vessel was 12.2cm high and 8cm in diameter.²⁶⁵ According to Minchev, the flask-

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ A paved street and ruins of dwellings dated to the Hellenistic up to Roman times have been explored. Several rooms have been unearthed to the north of the basilica encroaching the ancient street. See Minchev 2006, 231.

²⁵⁸ Achim 2003-2004, 18.

²⁵⁹ Minchev 2006, 231.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 238.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 235.

²⁶² Ibid., 241.

²⁶³ Ibid., 241.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 241

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 243.

shaped reliquary had been placed and venerated on the altar table before being transferred into the crypt.²⁶⁶

The aisles were divided by double columns, probably from an earlier building; these were subsequently replaced by solid stone walls covered with murals. The wall paintings were made of floral motifs on rectangular panels imitating colored marbles. A narrow entrance was left between the nave and the north aisle.²⁶⁷ The furnishing of the church was made of marble. The floor was paved with multicolored mosaics: the north aisle and part of the nave were covered by mosaics representing rows of square panels containing geometrical designs, crosses, stylized *cantharoi*, a Solomon knot etc.²⁶⁸ The south aisle and the rest of the nave were paved with mosaics with figural representations such as birds, baskets with fruits etc.²⁶⁹

Date: During the second half of the fifth century the second basilica was destroyed.²⁷⁰

3rd phase: During the third phase, a third basilica (no.3) of the same size and plan as the previous one was erected on the same location. Nevertheless, this church was built 1.60m above the floor level of the previous church, since the debris of the second church filled the layer between the previous and the new church. The floor of the basilica was covered with large marble slabs and the nave was divided from the aisles by eight pairs of monolithic columns.²⁷¹ In the area of the sanctuary, below the marble floor, a small square brick-built crypt was discovered. Originally, it was used as a relic container: a large part of a double column of the second basilica, cut out on the upper surface, was put in it. A separate building of a circular plan, originally used as a baptistery, was located to the northeast of the church.²⁷² The circular baptismal font of the baptistery was organized based on multiple axes of symmetry²⁷³.

Date: The reconstruction of the basilica is dated to the late fifth century. It was probably ruined in A.D. 614, during the Avar and Slav invasions, or some time earlier.²⁷⁴

17. Erite or Ereta basilica

In the area of the Ereta stronghold, the remains of a three-aisled basilica have been unearthed. Its approximate dimensions are 30m by 20m. White marble columns with Corinthian capitals divided the nave from the aisles. The column bases stood on

²⁶⁶Ibid., 248.

²⁶⁷Ibid., 234.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰Ibid., 235.

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²Achim 2003-2004, 18.

²⁷³Ibid., 8.

²⁷⁴Minchev 2006, 235.

square limestone blocks²⁷⁵ (**fig. 15**). According to the published plan, the apse is semicircular on the interior and three-sided on the exterior. Thick walls form the outline of the church; the east ends of the aisles are occupied by small rooms which had openings both to the sanctuary area and the aisles. The narthex is a single-space room without interior divisions. An oblong room, 6m long by 5m wide, was built to the north side of the basilica, close to the northeast corner. This room, which has a doorway leading to it from the north aisle,²⁷⁶ has been identified with the baptistery although no part of a baptismal font or any other part of water supplying system device has been discovered. The basilica is dated to the sixth century.²⁷⁷

18. Galata Church

The three-aisled basilica uncovered in the Galata locality on top of an ancient sanctuary of the Thracian Horseman is 23m long and 13m wide (**fig. 16**). The apse forms a segment of a circle. The nave is separated from the aisles with six limestone bases in rows standing directly on the ground. Many nails and remains of beams as well as fragments of brick tiles have been found; they all indicate that the basilica had a timber roof.²⁷⁸

A square baptistery, 5.35 x 5.35m, with a square baptismal font constructed with bricks has been unearthed in the north compartment of the narthex.²⁷⁹ The pedestal of the font had a double wall, the exterior of which was decorated with cut-out geometric patterns, whereas the interior was decorated with openings corresponding to those in the outer wall.²⁸⁰ Achim describes and comments upon a terracotta baptismal font, which was mobile²⁸¹: the water basin consisted of three separate parts, a base, a cylindrical leg and a basin with a drain for water²⁸². The basin had two inscriptions; the one located at the bottom reads *καὶ τῆς συννοδῆς ἀντ[οῦ]*. This expression is probably linked to the remembrance of a martyr or a donor than to any baptismal context. Unfortunately, the inscription on the upper part of the baptismal font is totally destroyed²⁸³.

Date: The pagan sanctuary must have been destroyed by the end of the fourth century. The basilica was probably erected in the course of the fifth and destroyed by fire at the end of the sixth century.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁵ Hoddinott 1975, 334.

²⁷⁶ Achim 2003-2004, 15.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Hoddinott 1975, 324.

²⁷⁹ Achim 2003-2004, 8 and 23.

²⁸⁰ Hoddinott 1975, 324.

²⁸¹ Achim 2003-2004, 7.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Hoddinott 1975, 325.

19. Basilica of Pirinć-Tepe

1st phase: A three-aisle basilica has been found in the village of Pirinć-Tepe²⁸⁵ (**fig. 17**). The first basilica had a semicircular apse. The nave was separated from the aisles with colonnades²⁸⁶, while the narthex of the basilica was undivided.

Date: The first basilica has been dated to the reign of Constantine the Great without conclusive arguments.

2nd phase: In the second phase, the basilica acquired a new three-sided apse. The nave was shortened by converting its east end and the east end of the aisles into a tripartite sanctuary. A new floor was set for the sanctuary, nave and narthex. Square limestone blocks carried re-used column bases, set upon brick stylobates.²⁸⁷ A room of unidentified use was added to the north side of the narthex and a baptistery was added to the north of the northeast compartment of the sanctuary. The baptistery had a separate vestibule to the south and two entrances on the south and the west walls; the dimensions of the vestibule are 3.20 by 1.42m, while the baptistery is 3.20 long by 3.30m wide²⁸⁸. The apse of the baptistery was three-sided on the exterior. The baptismal font had two opposite flights of stairs leading to a cylindrical reservoir circumscribed in a cross-shaped outline.²⁸⁹ The baptistery was probably covered with a groin vault supported by piers projecting from the corners²⁹⁰. Based on numismatic evidence, the baptistery is dated to the sixth century.²⁹¹

Date: The second phase of the church is dated to the period of the reign of Justinian.

20. The basilica at Škorpilovci near Varna

A three-aisled basilica with a single apse and narthex was found at Škorpilovci. The church is 21.4m long by 17.6m wide (**fig. 18**). According to the published plan made by K. Škorpil, the apse forms a segment of a circle; the sanctuary area has a Pi-shaped chancel screen.²⁹² The *naos* is divided by two arcades resting upon columns set on stylobates. A vaulted cist grave with traces of frescoes was discovered in the middle of the nave. There is no narthex; an undivided courtyard is added to the west of the church.

²⁸⁵Hoddinott 1975, 327.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

²⁸⁷Ibid., 329.

²⁸⁸Ibid., 23.

²⁸⁹Ibid., 329.

²⁹⁰Achim 2003-2004, 7.

²⁹¹Ibid., 19.

²⁹²Doncheva 2006, 157.

Date: Both the basilica and the crypt are dated between the late fifth and the early sixth century.²⁹³

PROVINCE OF SCYTHIA

TOPOLA (APHRODISIAS)

21. Early Christian Basilica

The Early Christian basilica is located at the locality of Kavakluka, outside the fortress. Architectural members made of limestone are reported from the site of the basilica. It may have undergone several building periods and may have been used as a monastery during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.²⁹⁴

22. Early Christian Church

Within the fortress, the remains of an Early Christian basilica were discovered. The church was totally demolished in the late nineteenth century.²⁹⁵

23. Callatis

Close to the north branch of the ancient wall, on the northeast edge of the city of Callatis, the remains of an Early Christian basilica were unearthed in 1959²⁹⁶(**fig. 19**).

The church was erected on an almost square-shaped plot limited by the city-walls, a road and several buildings of unidentified use. It was a three-aisle basilica in which two construction phases have been discovered.

1st phase: The first basilica was rectangular in shape with its approximate orientation being north-south. Its long sides measure 17m and 15.50m, while the width of the north side is 13.40m and the width of the south one 14m. The basilica does not have an apse but its southern part was used as a sanctuary. The sanctuary was probably separated from the nave by a wooden chancel barrier. On the east wall of the basilica, there were discovered two door openings which led to the courtyard. Another door to

²⁹³ Ibid., 146.

²⁹⁴ Minchev 2013, 257.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 256.

²⁹⁶ Barnea 1977, 128-129.

the south side of the complex is considered to be the main entrance of the church. This first period of the basilica is dated to the fourth century²⁹⁷.

2nd phase: The second period of the basilica is dated during the reign of emperor Anastasius I (491-518). The basilica retains its rectangular plan but during that period there were added some walls, which gave the church organized liturgical areas. The south side of the basilica was separated into three rooms communicating with one another; the central one was used as the sanctuary and the others are identified with sacristies²⁹⁸. The east sacristy with its lateral area was probably used as baptistery. The floors of the sanctuary and the sacristies were covered with bricks which were some centimeters lower than the rest of the floor level of the basilica. The nave was covered with large slabs which were set on a mortar bed²⁹⁹. Alongside the long walls of the church run constructed benches, 0.65-0.70m wide. On the east long wall a door was opened, which helped the communication between the church and the court. The court at this period was transformed into an atrium. It had porticos with marble colonnades and pillars in L shape, which supported the roof. The roofs were tilted to the inside of the court in order to collect the rain water; some of it ended up in the sea through water pipes, while smaller quantities were collected at the south-west part of the atrium, in a drainage well, located there for this reason. This collected water was used in divine services, baptisteries and other needs of the basilica³⁰⁰. On the east side of the atrium, the discovered buildings belonged to a wealthy private villa³⁰¹.

The architectural arrangement of the basilica does not follow the accepted standard that is present in all the other churches of the west Black Sea shore line. In this case, there the apse does not exist and the orientation is peculiar. This must have happened because, previous to the construction of the basilica, parts of earlier buildings either limited the free space or have been intentionally used in the new built-basilica. The simplicity of the construction and the limited free space, according to Barnea, are the reasons why the basilica does not have an apse. Moreover, according to him, the builders must have known and imitated Syrian basilicas, which can be attributed to the presence of Syrians in the city of Callatis.

It may not be the Syrian influence that led to this type of construction for the basilica in Callatis, but the need that the basilica adapts to this specific piece of land. The existence of at least two different construction phases, which were confirmed by the many different types of capitals³⁰² and the transformation of the court into an atrium confirm the attempts to customize the basilica according to the peculiar features of the plot and possibly the earlier buildings on it. Finally, the fact that among the nine inscriptions that have been found in Callatis, one originating from this basilica was

²⁹⁷Ibid., 129.

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹Ibid., 130.

³⁰⁰Ibid., 130-131.

³⁰¹Ibid., 134.

³⁰²Barnea 1977, 133, fig. 43.

inscribed with the Psalms in Greek and was set on a tomb³⁰³ explored inside the church, suggests that the basilica could not have belonged to a Syrian minority.

24. Basilica near the south harbor

Near the south port of Callatis, at the entrance of the present-day President Hotel, a basilica still unexplored has been located³⁰⁴.

BULGAREVO (*TIMUM*)

25. Early Christian Basilica

The remains of an Early Christian basilica have been found in the center of a fortified area. The emerging from the ground layout of the basilica, which is reported as decorated with marble and mosaic, is rectangular.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Barnea 2013, 316.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 317.

³⁰⁵ Minchev 2013, 254.

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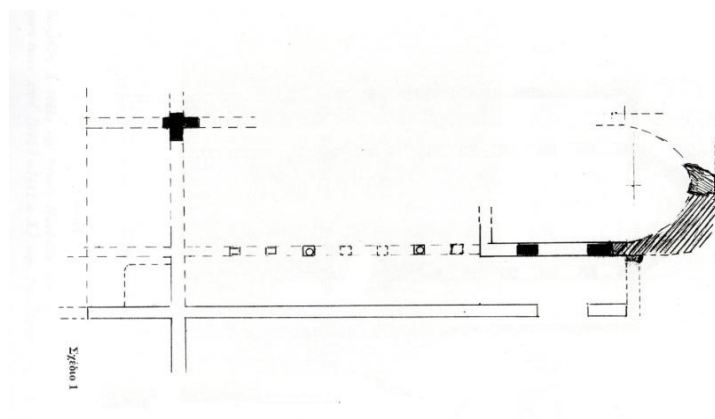
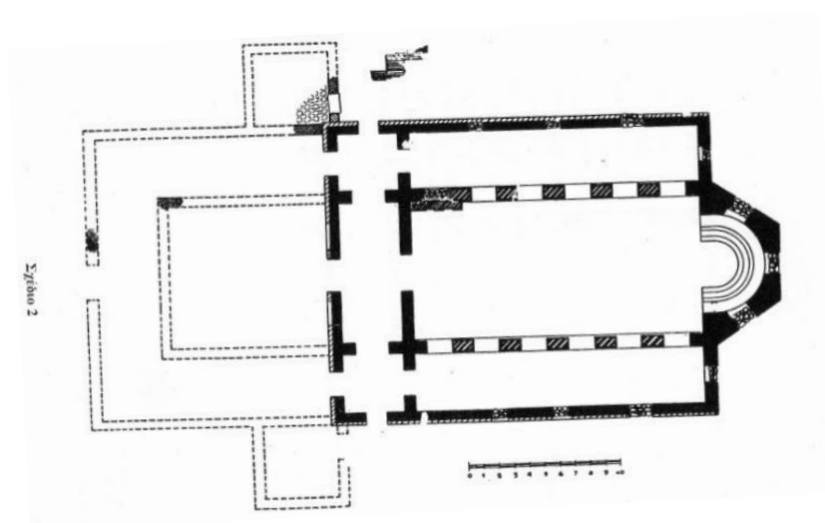


Fig. 1. — Nessebăr (*Mesembria*), basilica of the Holy Apostles, plan

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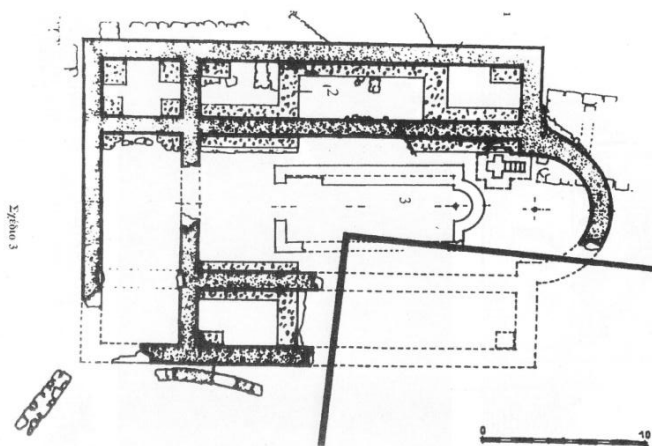
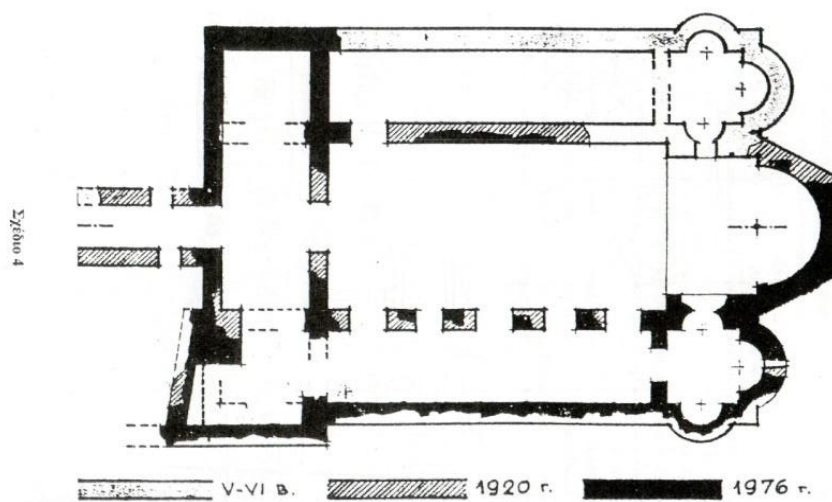


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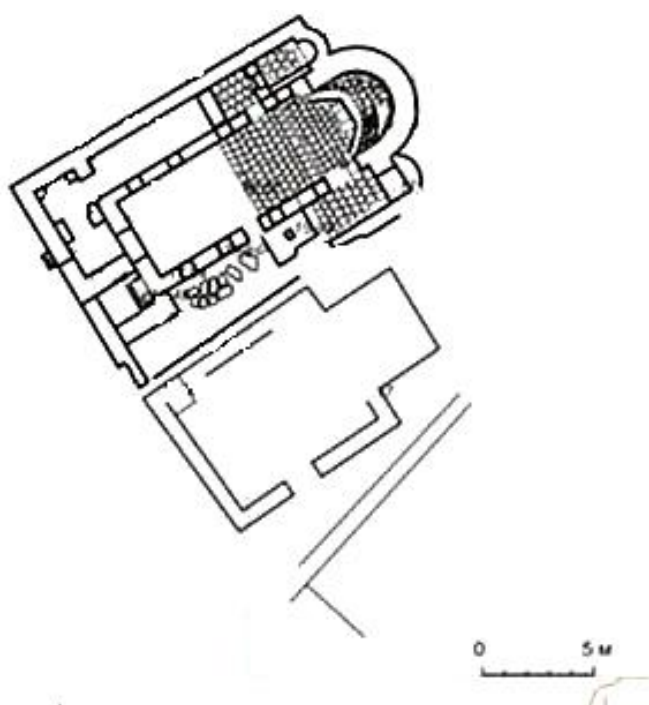


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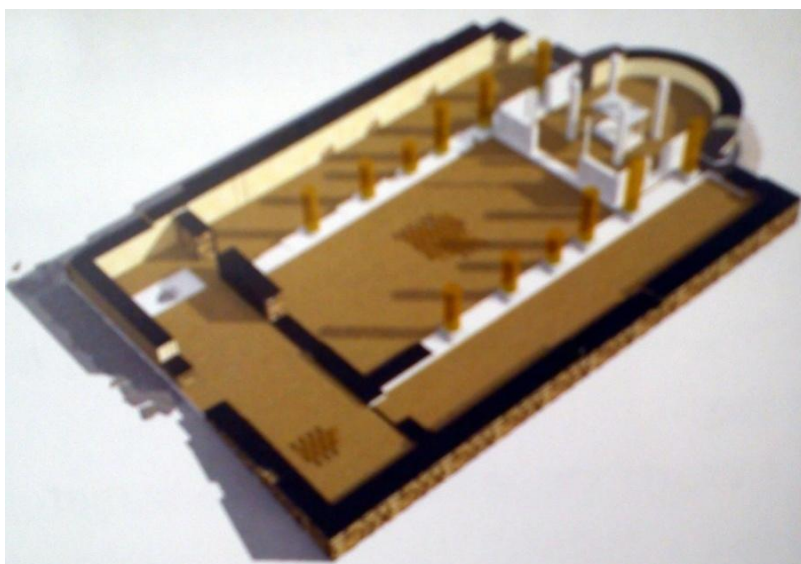


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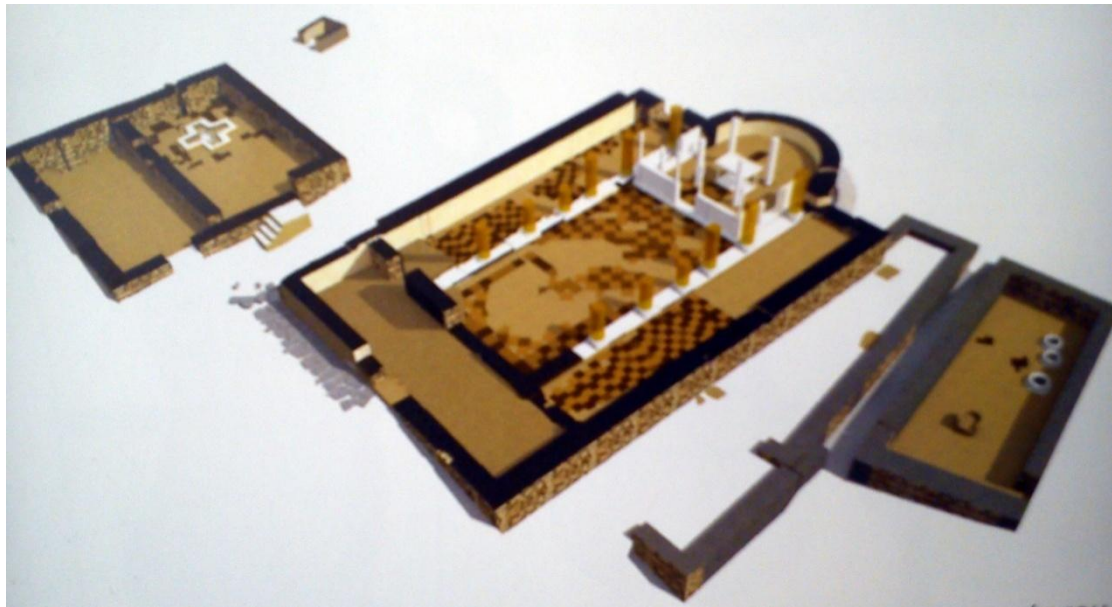


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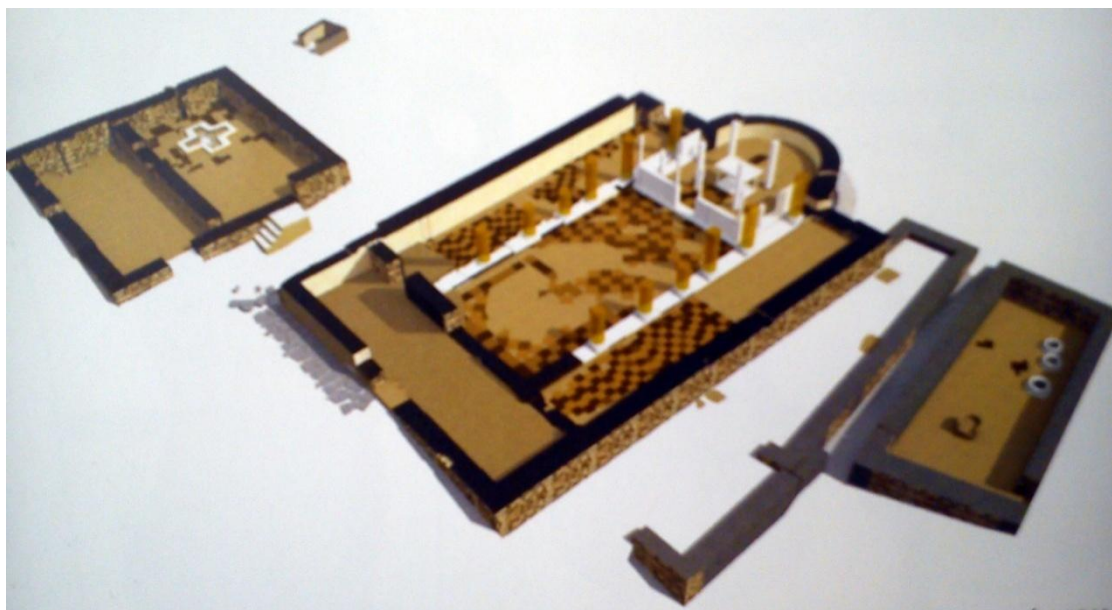
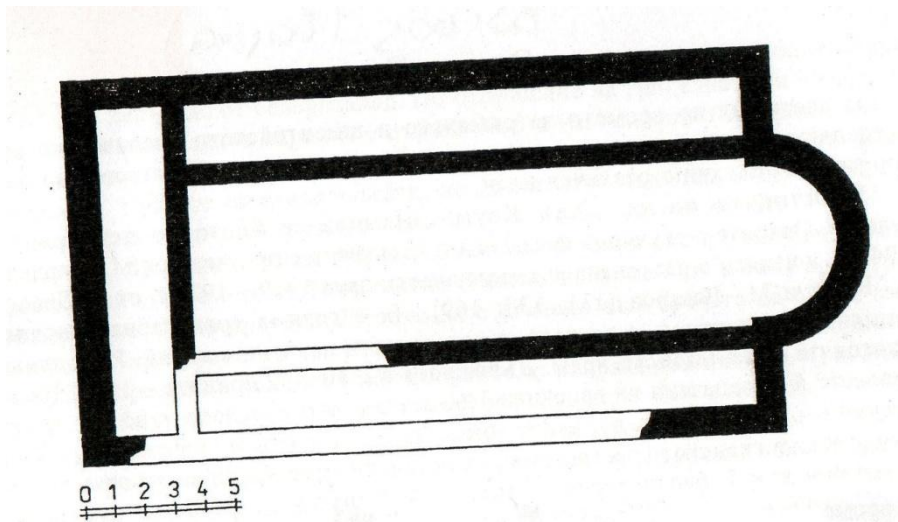
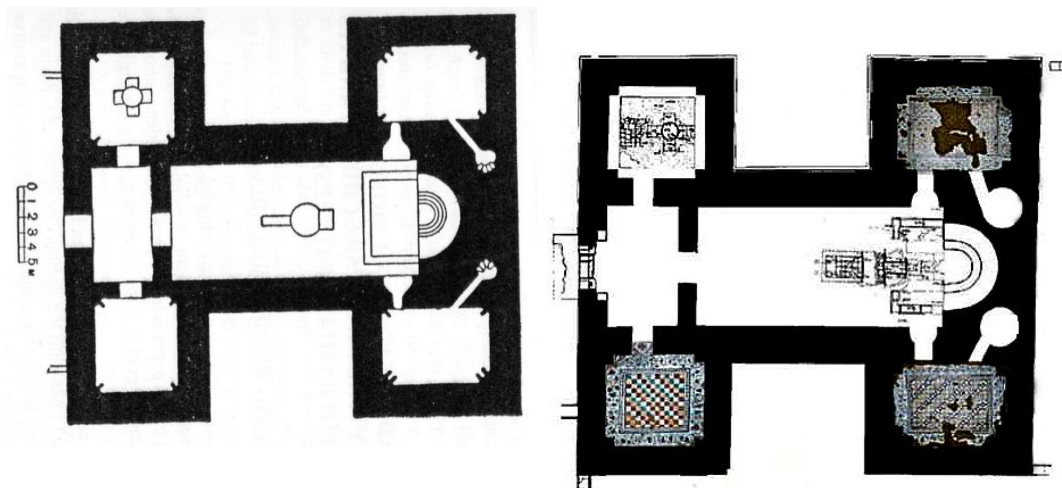




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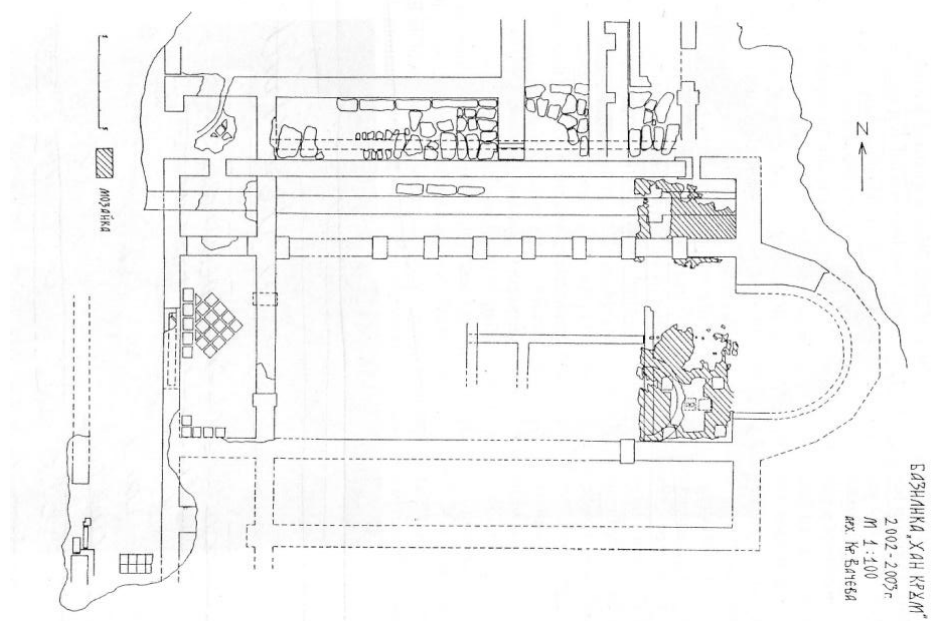
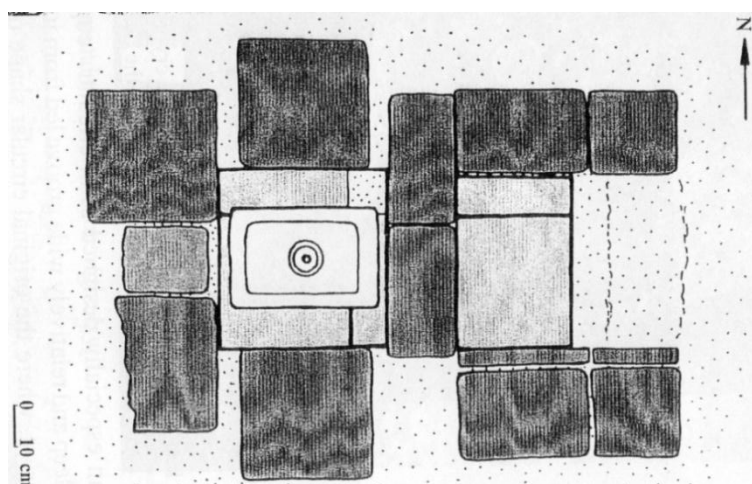


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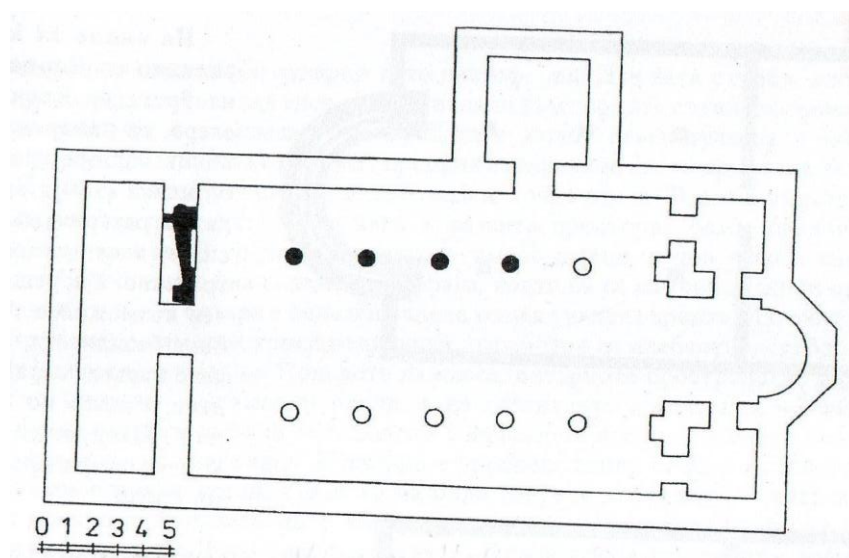
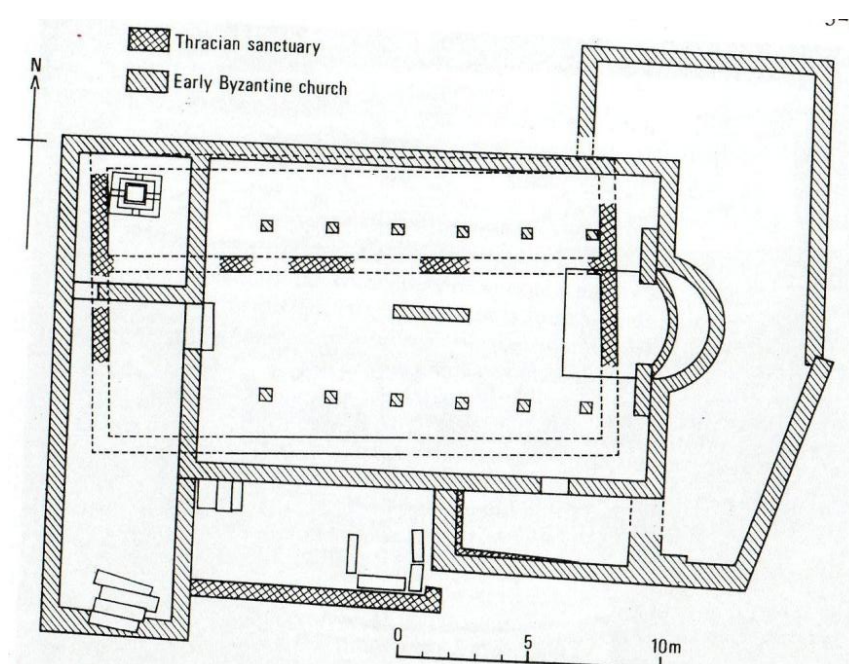


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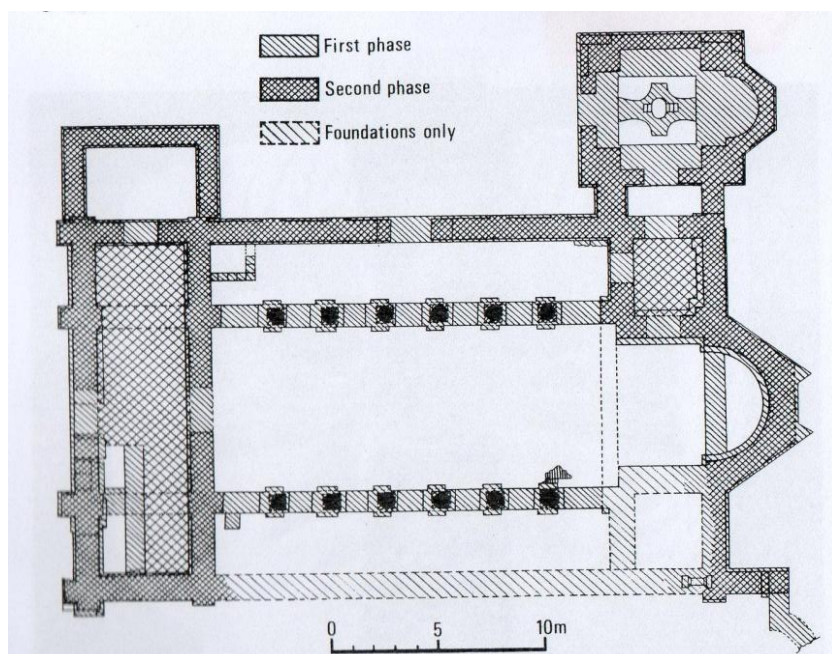
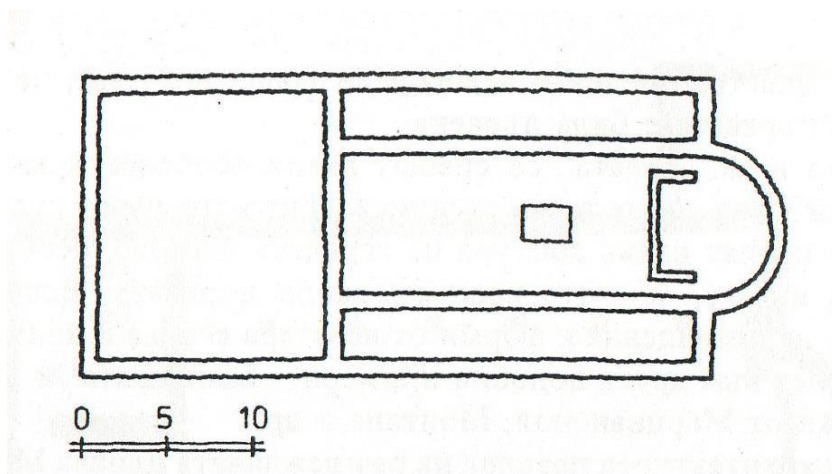


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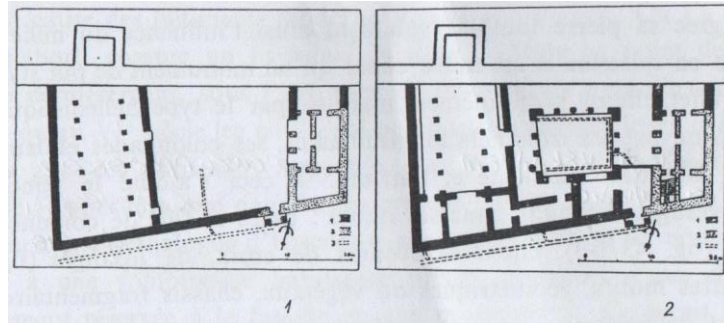
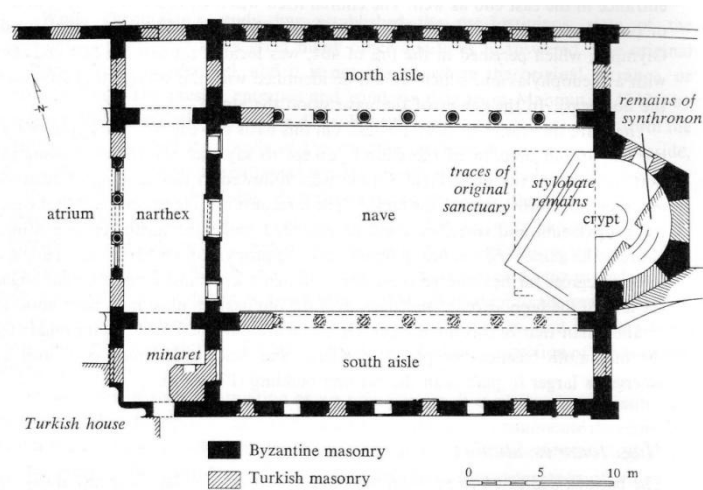


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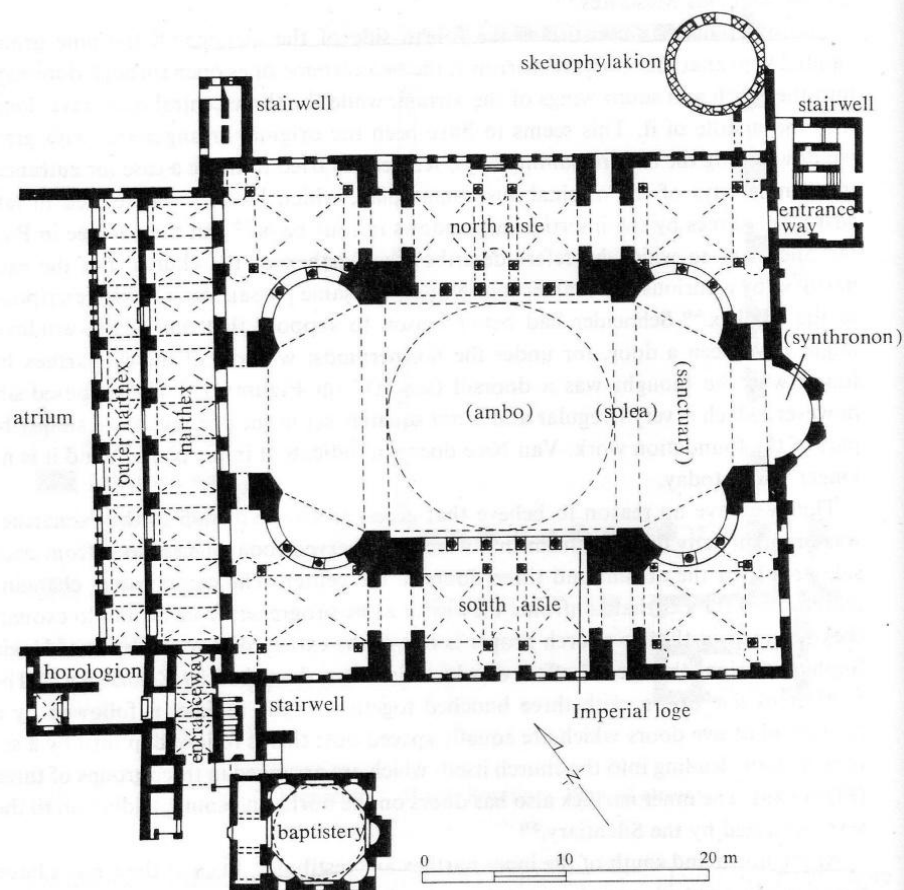
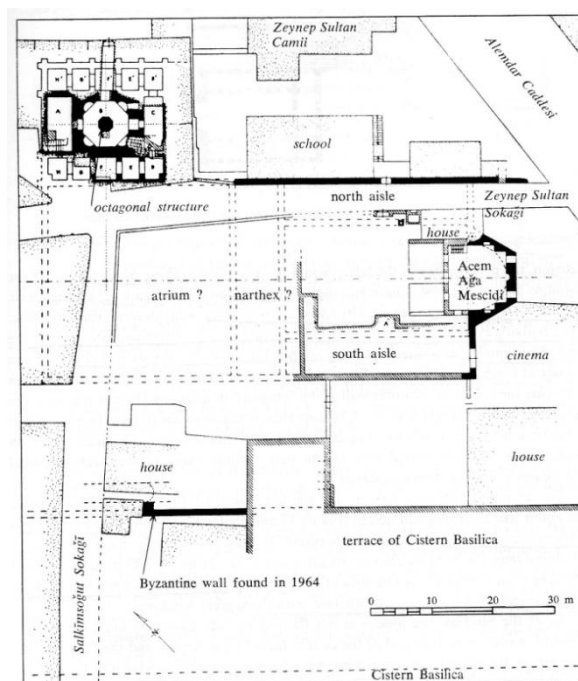


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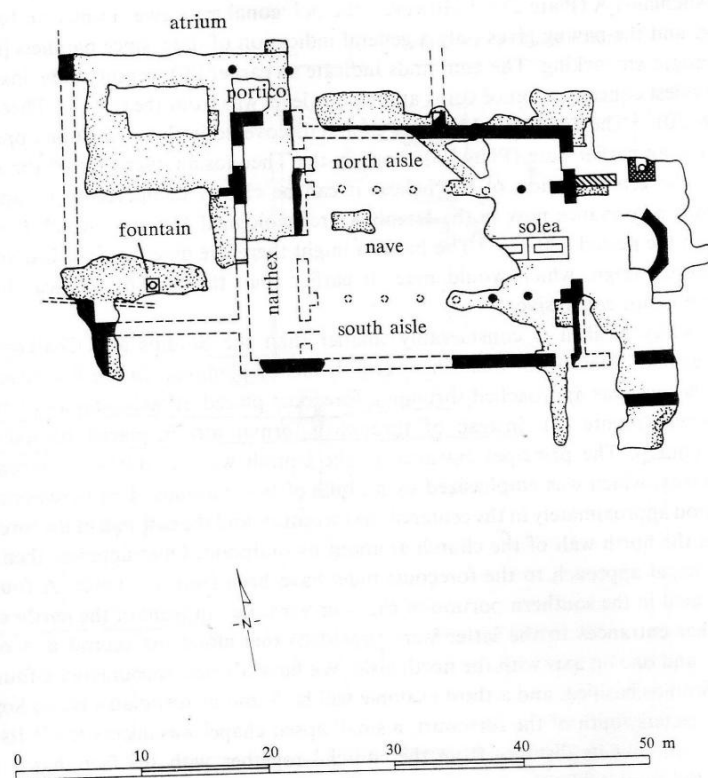
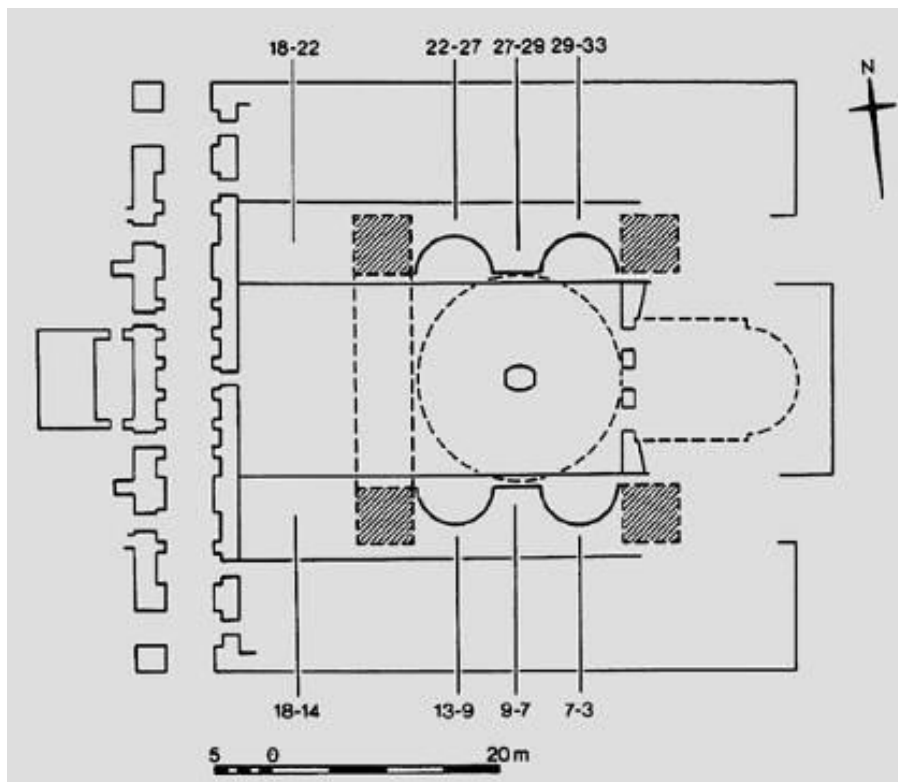


Fig. 23. — Ibid., Topkapi Sarayi basilica, plan

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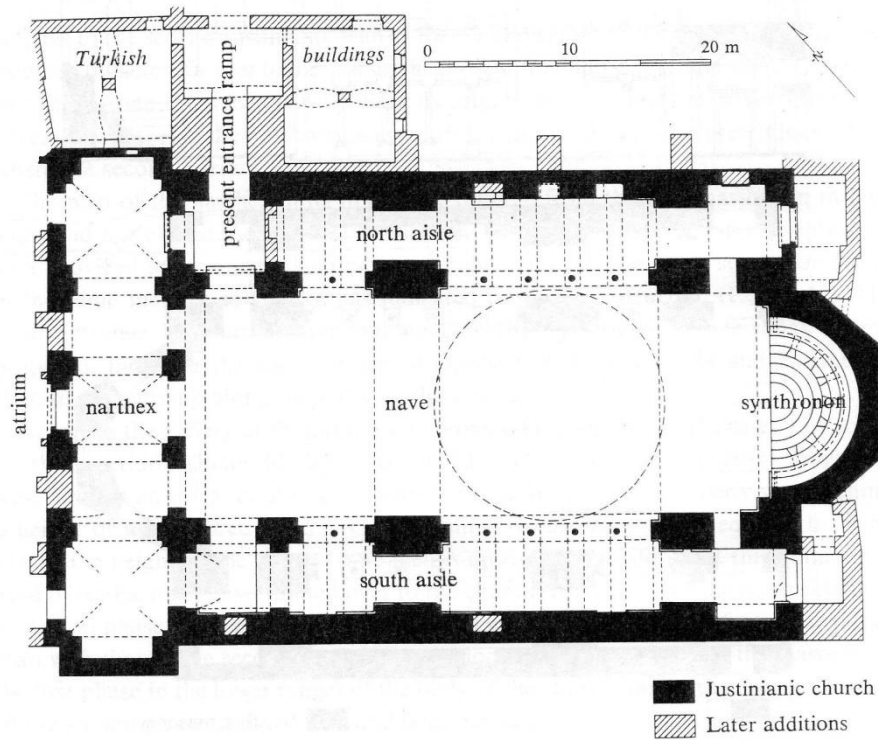
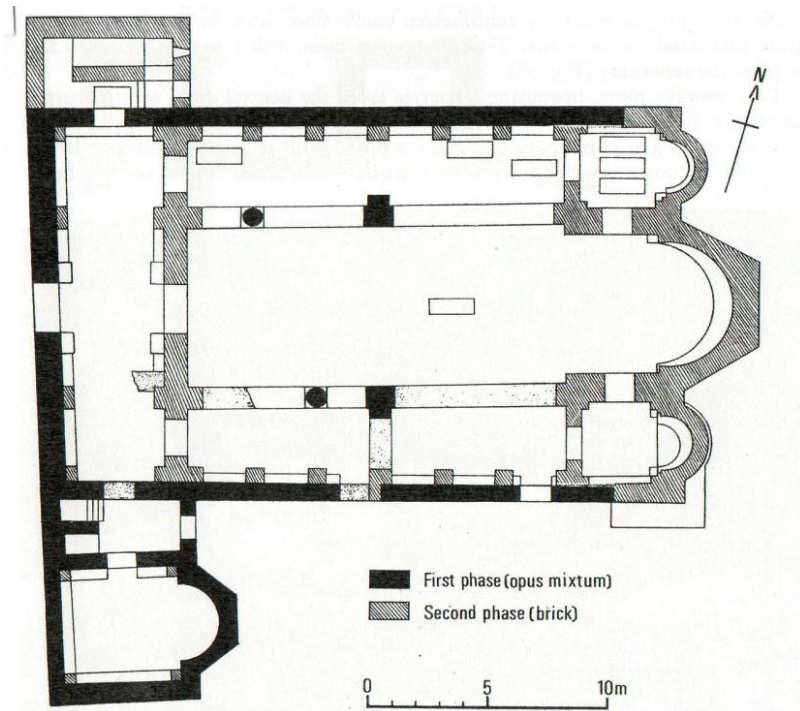


Fig. 25. — Ibid., Hagia Eirini basilica, plan

Fig. 26. — Pirdrop, Elenska basilica, plan showing the two building phases



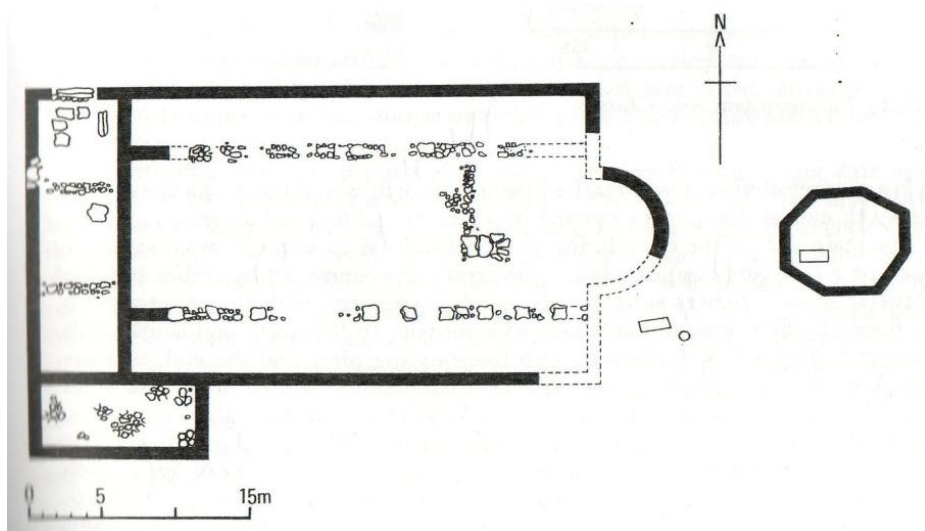
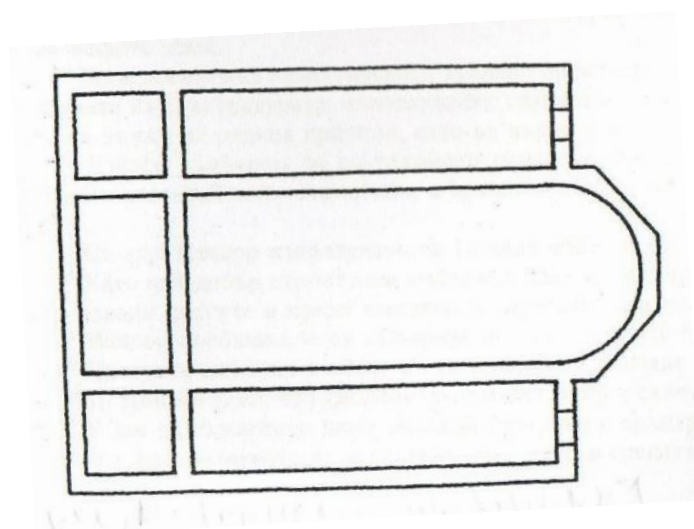


Fig. 27. — Komatevo, basilica, plan

Fig. 28. — Abrit, Dobričko province, basilica no. 1, plan



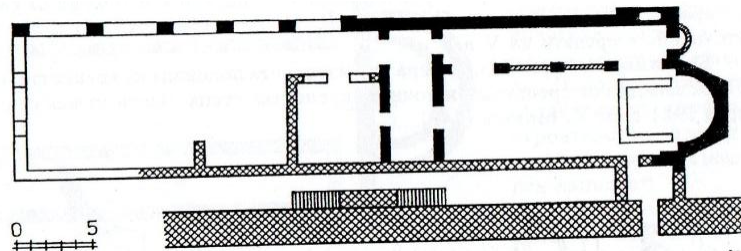
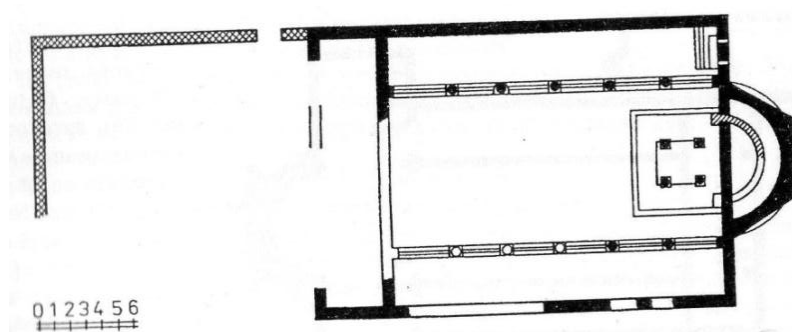


Fig. 29. — Hissar, basilica no. 1, plan

Fig. 30. — Ibid., basilica no. 3, plan



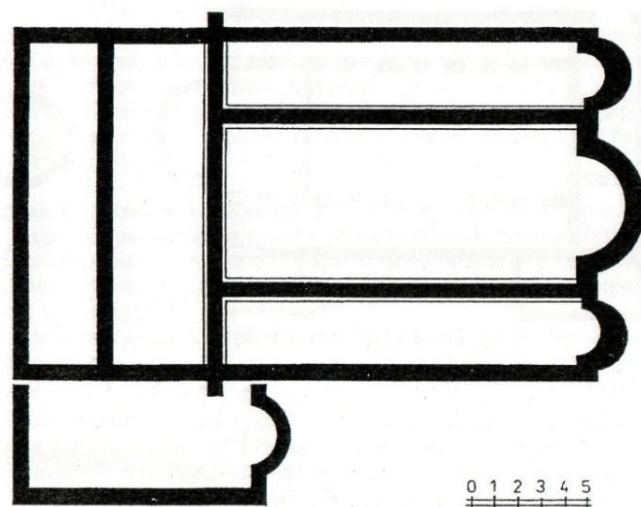
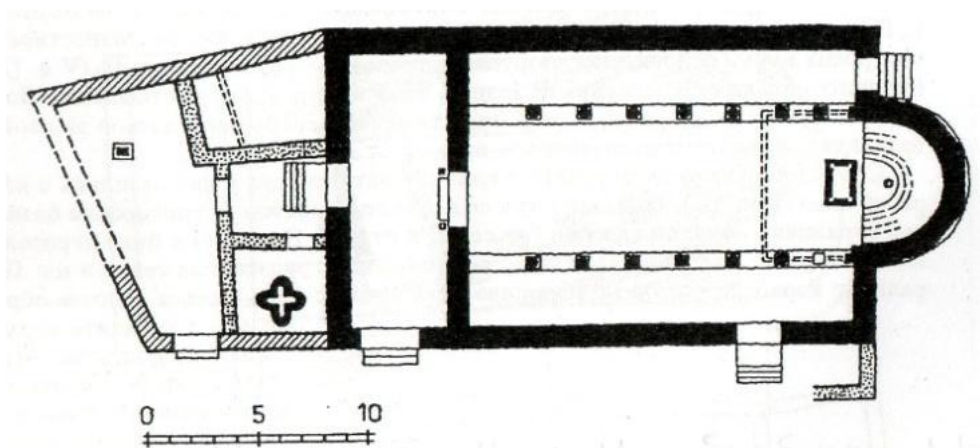


Fig. 31. —Plovdiv, Branipole locality, basilica, plan

Fig. 32. — Tărgoviște, Krumovo Kale stronghold, basilica no. 2, plan



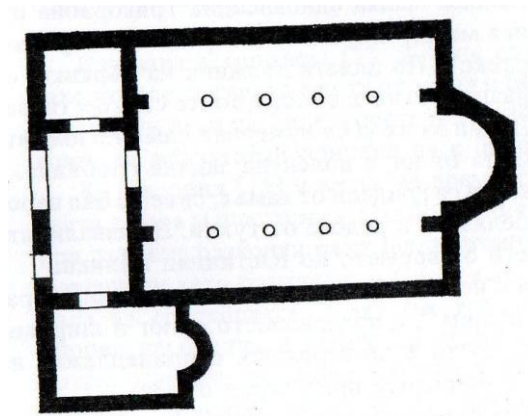
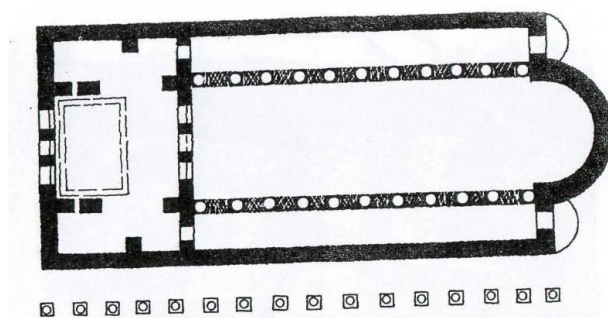
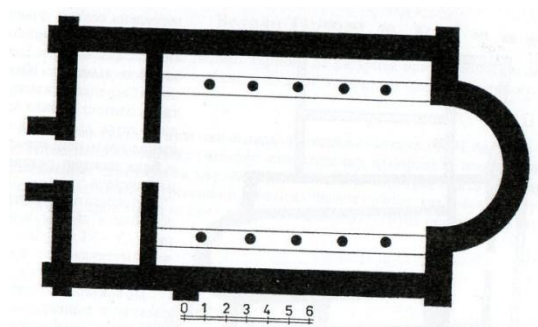


Fig. 33. — Veliko Tŕrnovo, basilica at the «Patriarchal Complex», plan

Fig. 34. — Pleven, basilica no. 2, plan

Fig. 35. — Hissar, Yourta locality, basilica, plan

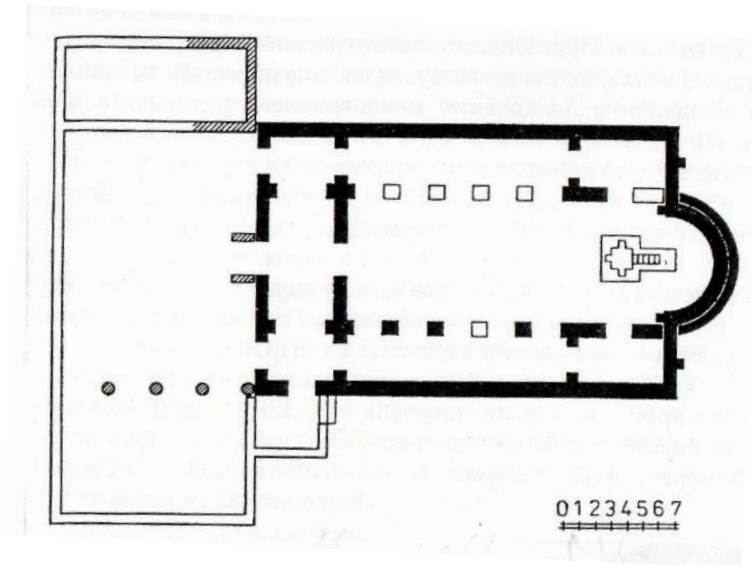
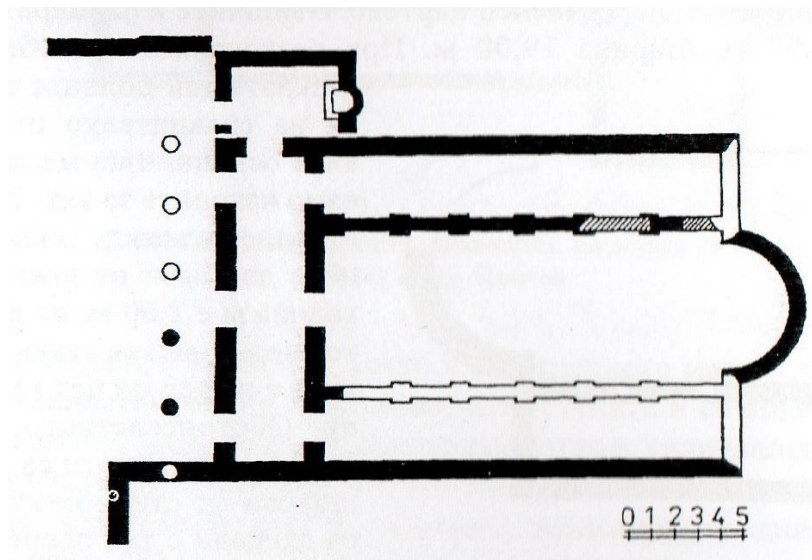


Fig. 36. — Hissar, basilica no. 6, plan

Fig. 37. — Ibid., basilica no. 8, plan



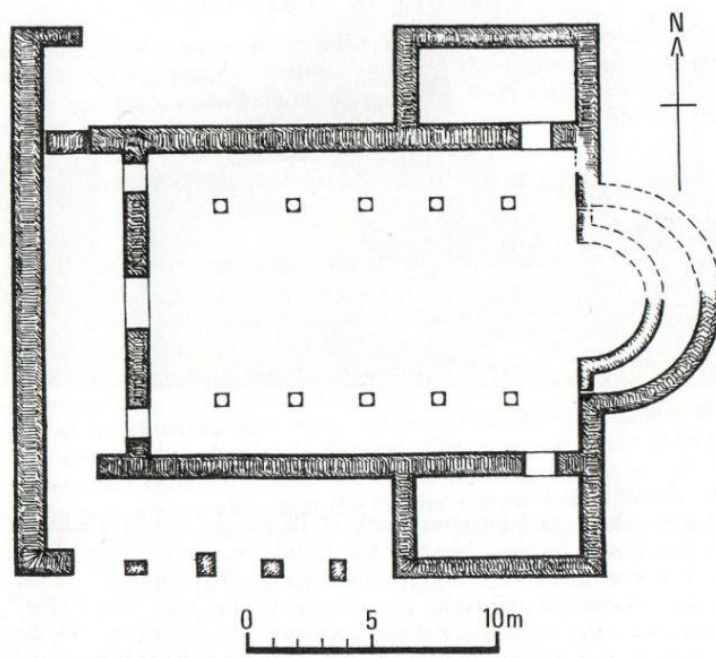
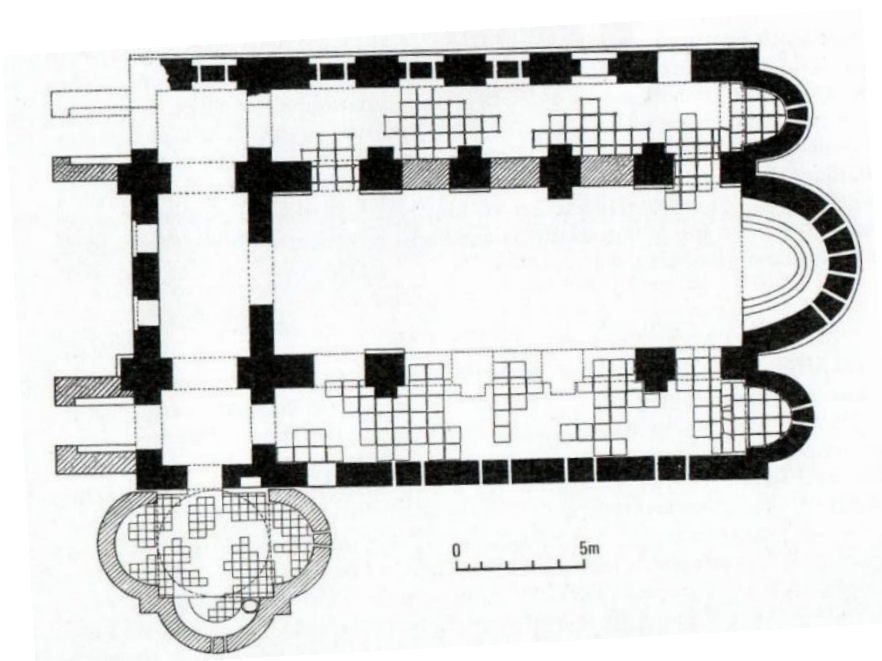


Fig. 38. — Preslav, Deli-Douška locality, basilica, plan

Fig. 39. — Golyamo Belovo, basilica, plan



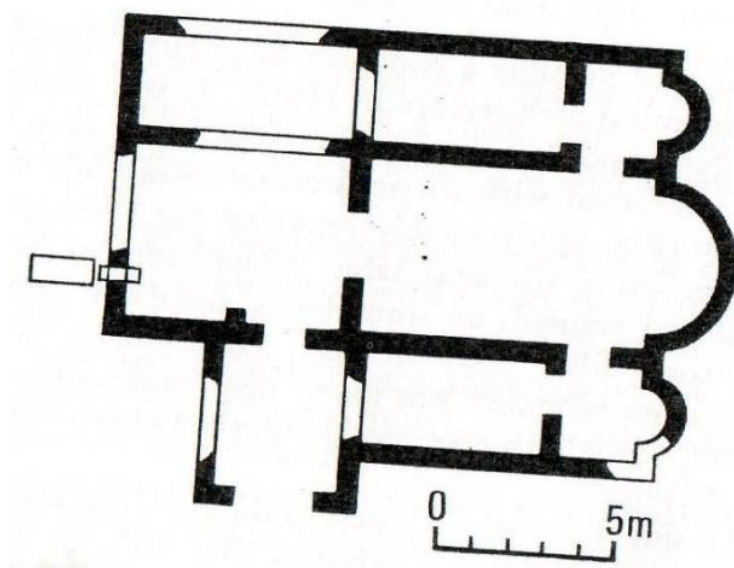
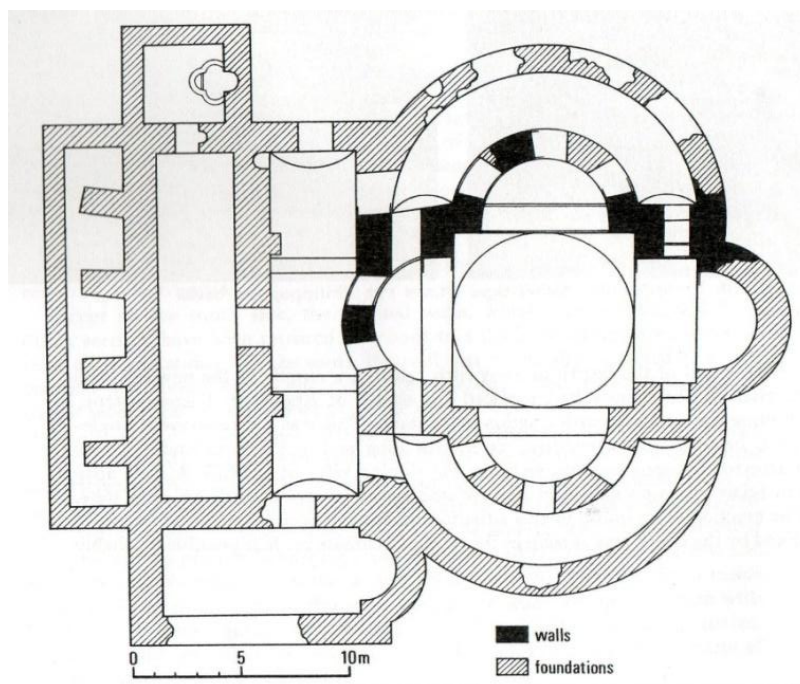


Fig. 40. — Hissar, basilica no. 9, plan

Fig. 41. — Perouštića, the «Red Church» tetraconch, plan



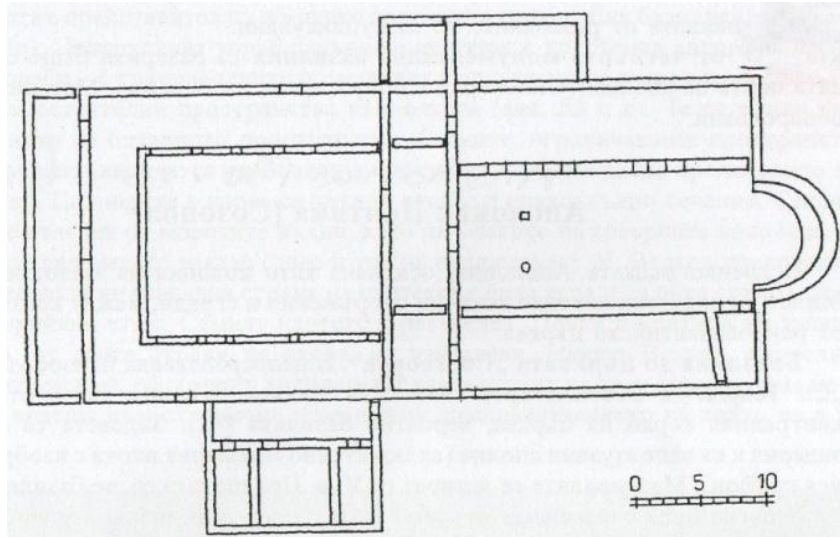
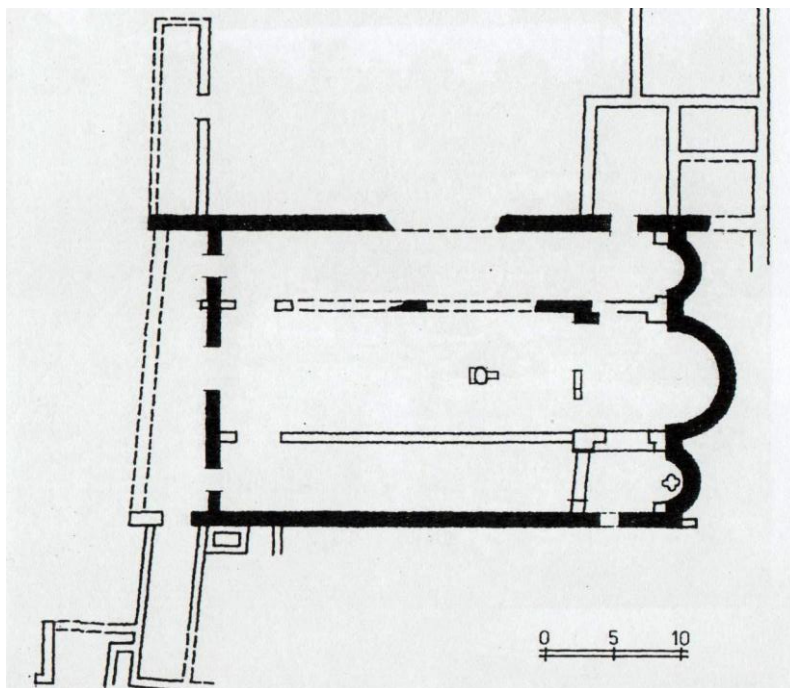


Fig. 42. — Kabile, near Tundja, basilica no. 1, plan

Fig. 43. — Novae, the episcopal basilica, plan



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